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THE HOUSE OF THE
FIGHTING - COCKS





The HOUSE *of the*
FIGHTING-COCKS

By HENRY BAERLEIN

LONDON

LEONARD PARSONS

DEVONSHIRE STREET

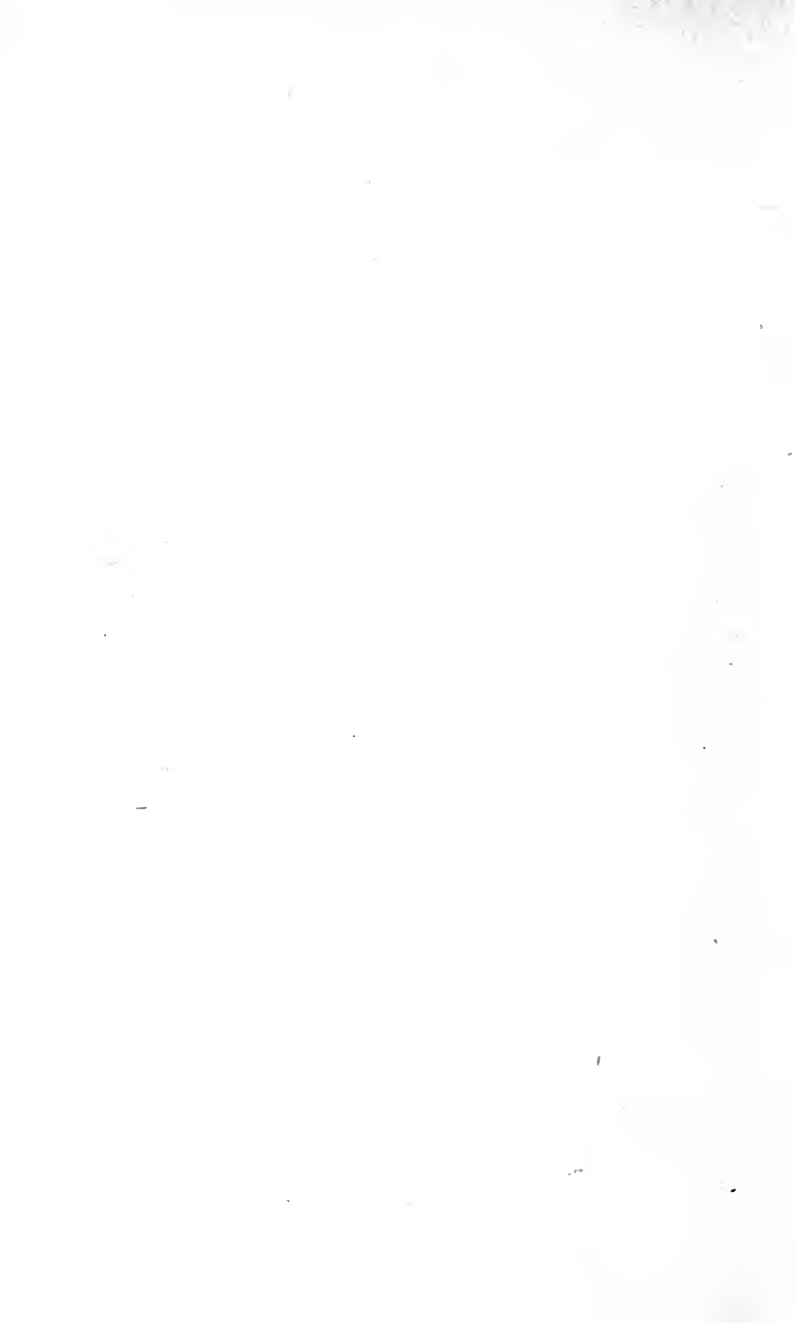
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Leonard Parsons, Ltd.

To ——

It is the pleasant custom, as you will remember, of the Swedes to hang a garland round the neck of those who go a journey. You have been my comrade in a thousand journeys while this book was being written and it seems ridiculous that I should now suspend on you these withering flowers of speech. And yet the journeys did not cause you inconvenience, for you never knew that they were being made.

H.B.



PREFACE

WHETHER I shall die to-morrow or in twenty years or thirty does not matter, for now I have written the last word of my book. It is the fifth of June, 1880.

I have accomplished all that God has given me the strength to do.* This poor memorial of my friends of long ago may be more durable than a stone monument, which few regard until the day comes when a revolutionary mob or General believe it is the statue of a tyrant and they drag it down; this manuscript of mine may cause my heroes to be known more clearly in the years to come than would a painting which the Governor of Veracruz, my State in Mexico's Republic, would display to some rich foreigner who wishes to exploit the country, and the foreigner, not caring what the picture is, would pay the Governor as if, indeed, it were the picture of Two Early Saints by Fra Angelico. Whatever be the fate of monuments or paintings in another country, it is here among the most uncertain; while a manuscript will not be touched by anyone who is unworthy to become the friend of my dear friend, Eugenio Gil.

It is not seemly for a person such as I to say that all the world is dull, as I have often heard it said by venerable men, when they recall the stirring days in which they had a part. Assuredly it is to dullards

* The Spanish MS., translated here, was found in excellent condition at Jalapa, in the year 1911. The owner of the house knew nothing of it. (*Translator's note.*)

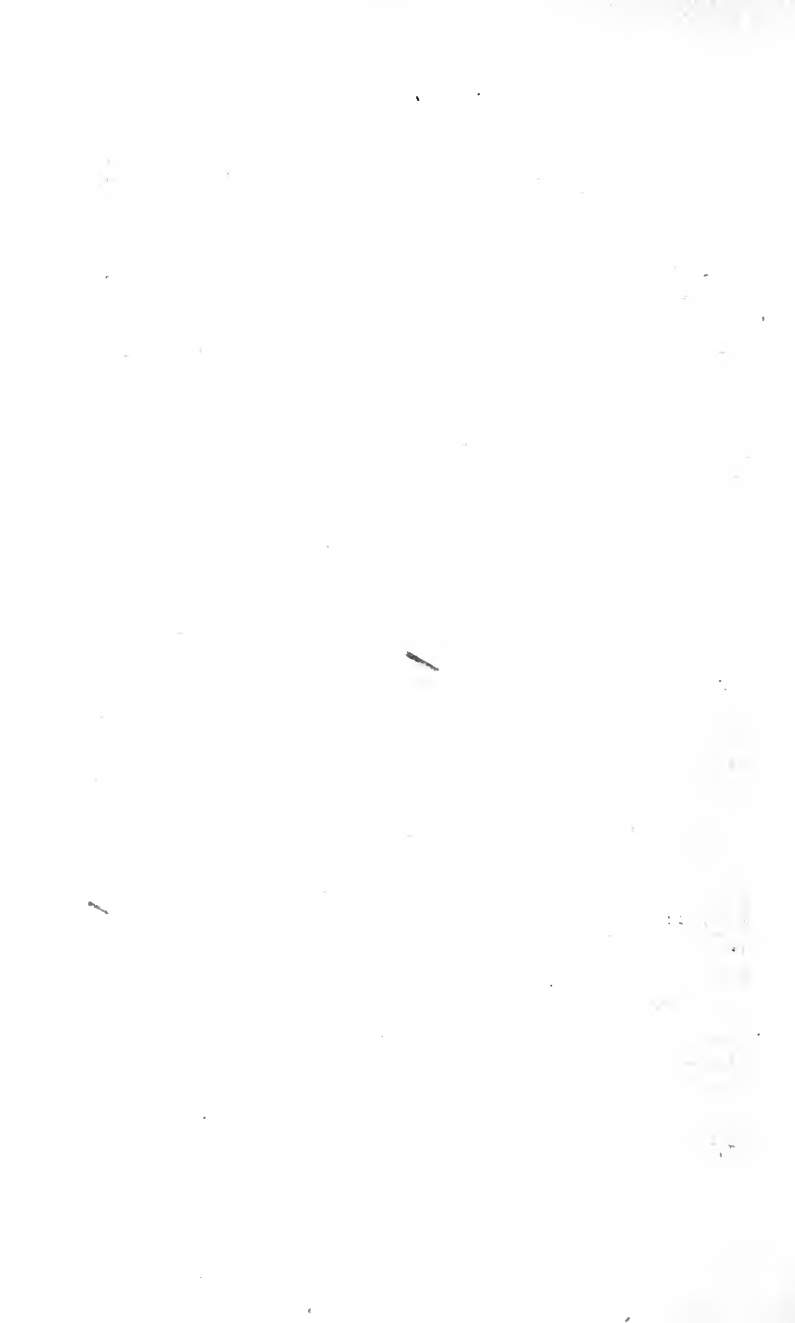
that the world is dull—one ought to pity them—and for myself the world is not so splendid as it was in 1866 and 1867. I never had occasion, except once, to go beyond the frontiers of the State of Veracruz, which, from the palm lands by the sea, goes rolling up through gorgeous pasture and through woods of everlasting green, up to the distant shadowy hills and to the brilliant snows on Orizaba, the dead volcano, that is like a spear which threatens the blue vault of heaven. The grey roads which the Spaniards built and the long forest trails of my own people have been trodden by the same steps, bold and hesitating, furtive, thoughtful, as the wildernesses or the streets of other countries; but for me, because they have resounded to the footsteps of the disciple of Noah and of Don Eugenio Gil, they seem the most extraordinary roads in all the world.

So far as I know, nothing has been written of this brave philosopher, the Noahcite, who lived and died in Mexico. The population of Jalapa, where his home was, did not try to understand what he was doing, for in their opinion he was mad. I will not venture to make any criticism of so strange a man, who certainly was most unfortunate; what I can do is merely to repeat, so far as I remember them, his glorious ideas. What occupied him was no less than All Knowledge, in so far as it was known to Noah, for he held that ignorance produces our unhappiness, that knowledge, on the other hand, means happiness, and that the person in whose head All Knowledge lay was Noah. I am well aware that many people think it is an idle thing to want to have All Knowledge in one's head, to be, in fact, a pantologist (one who studies or is versed in universal knowledge), and they would unhesitatingly reject the system of our patron.

He was pleased to tell Eugenio Gil and me that he was happy, owing to the work on which he was engaged. And it was his firm intention to bestow the gift of happiness on everybody, after he had made himself the perfect master of it. You will learn with deep regret that he was executed for conspiracy in the State of Tamaulipas.

As for Don Eugenio Gil—if Spain had only sent us more like him! “With the passing of the years,” says the Friar Gregorio de la Concepcion Melero y Piña, “death comes to our passions, and our prejudices are extinguished and a path is made for truth into the souls of men who go in search of it with a good will.” My master, Don Eugenio, had a good will, and if he had lived longer then the passions which so hampered him might have been utterly destroyed. Whatever I have learned of letters I acquired from him. And if he had not been so tossed about the world, I think he would have been like famous doctors in the books; but never like the Doctor Cañizares, who is now remembered on account of having fed his pupils on an onion and a little bread, and sometimes on a stew of goats’ feet.

Men whom God has made austere may think my master was too self-indulgent, but he was not hard on anyone. He did not in the least resemble those unpleasant people who deny themselves all pleasures here on earth in order that, when they are dead, they may be famous. And he was wont to say that God, who made the grandeur of the universe, could certainly have made him a much better man, if that had been His will.



CHAPTER I

My name is Juan de Dios Eusebio de la Concha, for my father was a pious man, a breeder of fighting-cocks, who was a friend of the great de la Concha family, although my father was a native of the country, an Indian, and they were Spanish.

It was in the village of Colorado that we lived, and all the neighbouring country, as far up as Jalapa, used to buy its fighting-cocks from my dear father, so that he became more prosperous than anyone, he thought, of our ancestors. But he said that he would always remain in the village, no matter how great he might become, for it was in the middle of his district, and indeed he was regarded as the chief man of Colorado. Our wooden house was not very large, but it was the largest, with a balcony on the first floor and iron bars at some of the windows, like the fine houses at Jalapa, and in front of it there was a long verandah. So the travellers from Veracruz, who came on horse-back or on mule-back or in litters or in shaky carriages, would sleep at our house if they had to stop at Colorado. And my father was the only person in the village who subscribed to a newspaper; he kept them in a room downstairs and for the benefit of travellers who, even if they were escorted by a military troop, fell often into ambushes where bandits robbed them of their clothes. The newspaper, which also came from Veracruz, was not very strong, so that my father would not let me touch it. But he told me that some

day I must learn how to read, because our family was growing rich, and thus if any traveller who was forced to buy a newspaper consented to instruct me in the letters, then my father sold it him or her more cheaply. That is how I came to be the only person in all Colorado, with the exception of the priest, who knew the alphabet; for Señor Gonzalez, the shop-keeper on the opposite side of the road, and Captain Bartolmé Robledo, the old man, regretted, as they told my father, that they had not had a father such as he was.

My mother was a very thoughtful woman; she used to tell my father nearly every day that all things have their end and that perhaps his wealth would leave him.

But he used to stroke her anxious face and laugh at her. It was to him like some old funny story which we love to have repeated. "Mother Guadalupe," he would say to her, "I tell you that you are the pearl of women."

She was always shaking her dear head when I played soldiers with my father. What he did was to shout: "Psh! psh!" and what I did was to fall flat on my stomach—that was the whole game and I loved to play it.

"You will train him," quoth she, "to be a warrior and then he will go out from here and be killed. Thank the holy saints," she said, "that you have money and our Juanito need not go to fight for any of them. It is wicked money that one makes in that way."

"There is plenty of it," laughed my father. "If you are a man on one side you can always sell the guns and powder to the chieftain of the other side. But our son is not going to be a common soldier."

Yet she was not satisfied. "Father Pedro," she

would say, "the holy ones do not look down with favour on a fighting man, except if he be fighting for the faith. I know very well," she said, "that all their proclamations, whether they be Juarez generals or generals who would kill him, or great foreign generals of the Emperor Maximilian, I know that all of them announce that they are fighting on the side of God, and some of them are liars and that is why they are killed," said my mother.

"Or because they don't fall on their stomachs," said my father. "Anyhow, while there is wind in the palm tree, as they say, so long will the women cajole us, and you are the pearl of women."

It was impossible for my poor mother to invoke the priest, because he was so friendly with my father; he was one of those who bought the cocks, and on a Sunday, when the Mass was over, he would come with all of us into the space which is in front of the shop of Señor Gonzalez. After the Mass, he said, he was like other citizens. Thus he would never tell my father what the holy ones might have against him. "You are a good woman," he used to say to my mother, "for when you are kneeling down in the church I have seen you keep your arms stretched out for five or six minutes. And how would you have me declare that the holy saints are angry with a man for being a soldier or pretending to be one? Do not we, the reverend priests, accompany the troops?" He smiled at her in his weak, amiable way.

The village was like any other, with fine palm trees and all sorts of other trees and cactus. Here and there, among the trees, were houses built of painted wood, all kinds of colours. That one of the Señor Gonzalez was the meeting-place; my father, when he was not somewhere else to do his business, liked to

sit outside it in the night, with other players. Our own house was opposite, and even if we had not seen him underneath the flaring lamps we should have known that he was there, because he laughed so heartily. My mother said that even if he lost his money at the game he would be laughing—and we Mexicans are such a silent race—she never knew if he had won or lost, so that her hatred for Gonzalez was intense. She would lean out from the low window of her dark room for an hour or two hours at a time, and when my father had returned she spoke against Gonzalez.

“Nonsense !” cried my father. “What should we do without him ? And I told him just this evening that you are the pearl of women, and he said it was the truth.”

Of course my father did not spend a very large part of his time in playing games with me or playing at the shop. His business occupied him, and it grew so large that he was sorry I had learned to read, he said, because it would not be a seemly thing if I continued merely as a man of business. What I was to be he did not know, but something grander than himself at any rate.

One day when he came from a journey he informed my mother that he had a plan for me. He was more grave than I had ever seen him, and he sat down on the floor, as if we had no chairs. Then he reached up and took my hand and started smoothing it, while I was wondering why his own hand trembled so.

“Is it that you have been robbed on this journey ? Did they take the cocks or else your money ?” asked my mother.

“Oh, you always think the worst at once,” he said.

“And now you want to make our only son a

brigand. It is profitable, certainly, but they will never take him into heaven, and with sleeping on the mountain-tops and all those places he will catch a chill. Father Pedro, . . .”

“By the saints !” he said, “it is all wrong what you are saying. I have settled that when travellers come to the house they shall behold our Juanito reading in the newspapers, and when they see it they will, some of them will, offer him a post, and if it is a good post . . .”

“He shall never go away from Colorado !” she exclaimed, and there she stood in front of us, seeming much taller than usual, and with her sad eyes glittering.

But from that day when there was a traveller who stopped with us I nearly always found occasion to display my talents. I would sit beside the table where they ate and, with the newspaper spread out before me, read aloud. Sometimes they complimented me or gave me little presents, and sometimes a lady kissed me ; sometimes they were furious, when there was nothing yet for them to eat, and sometimes they sat talking the more loudly. “When that is what they do,” said my father, “it is because they cannot read.” He waited patiently for one to come who would give excellent advice or even take me with him to the glory I deserved.

The newspaper I read was always the same one, as they were so valuable in the way I have explained before. You might suppose that all the people of the village would be eager for me to read out to them what each new paper said, but the people of a village do not change their habits quickly, and in years gone by they had not felt the need of any paper. And in all the village, with the exception of the few books

of the priest, there was only one book, which had formerly belonged to Captain Bartolmé, and now was mine. He gave it me because he said he was no student. It had fallen into his possession when he plundered a dead officer, and since it dealt with stately Spanish dances, and he was, he said, a patriot and also could not dance, he thought it would be better if he gave it me. You may be sure that I was proud of it, and so was my father; in fact, the old captain seemed always now to have a place at our table, and at the end of the meal he enveloped in his cloak such articles of food as lay about him, just as if it was some sweet that he was taking to his children. At his house, my father said, there was no food at all, for he had been abandoned by the Government, and Enriqueta, that woman who looked after his house, was nearly starving. I think before he gave me the Book of Dances poor Captain Bartolmé was wont to come a little time before a meal, and, rocking to and fro in his chair, to relate a story of how he had dispersed the enemies of Mexico. It was a long tale, and, with rare exceptions, he was not obliged to go through more than half of it before the dishes were brought in, and he sat down among the rest of us. But now, if perchance my father was not in good spirits, he had only to strike an attitude which came out of the book, and usually he had not even to do that.

Then, one day in the hot season of 1866, I had been lying with some other children underneath a tree, and we had been amusing ourselves with making patterns of dust on each other's bodies, when I saw a traveller in black arrive and look all round him, searching for a man, because it was the hour when people rest. And then he slowly mounted the verandah of our house;

I saw that he was very tired, but it was my duty to read pieces of the paper to him and I got up also, feeling that it was a most intolerable burden to be someone so instructed.

As he heard me he turned round. His face was a dull red, and there was something very mournful in his eyes. "My son," quoth he, "I am in great need of a cup of water." He was not as old as my father, but the hair, which, being wet, clung to his forehead in large curls, was grey.

It is extraordinary, when I come to think of it, that I, in total nakedness, was not at all embarrassed by this stranger. But he was the sort of man with whom it is impossible to be embarrassed. For a European he was not a tall man; yet he had about him an air of magnificence, and this was not diminished by the lower part of his rather heavy face—for in repose it smiled, a smile that altered from moment to moment, a smile that seemed to run out of his mouth and to play hide and seek in the dimples of his ruddy chin—and still less was his magnificence diminished by his physical condition or the dust which lay upon his old black suit.

"It seems to me," he said, "that I can go no further till to-morrow. You, with your young legs, you cannot think how tired I am."

I told him I would fetch my father, who was sleeping.

But he held his hand up, a beautiful plump hand. "Oh, by no means," he said. "Let me drink a cup of water and then show me where to sleep."

By this time a few of my companions had approached us. One of them I sent for water. I could not break off this wonderful and heavenly

conversation, though now that I have put it down it does not seem so different from others.

Presently my father came out from the house. "Señor," he said, not caring that the traveller had come on foot, "this is the only place for travellers in Colorado. But you are in a good humour."

"Host," said he, "I have got 65 centavos. Therefore I cannot ask for more than half a bed."

"Señor," said my father, "from your language I perceive that you are a Spaniard from Spain. But although I must abhor you, since you were the enemy, yet I have never slain one while he slept within my house, which is at the disposal now of Your Illustrious Person. Some of those who come to these lands out of Spain do not like the particular small insects of our beds, but you are the determined traveller. In fact," said my father, nodding his head rapidly up and down—a way with him when his emotions were engaged—"in fact," said he, "I would embrace you if I were not a poor Indian only."

They embraced, with many pats upon each other's backs, and then they went into the house and, for a time, I stayed among the other children. We were talking of the traveller, and wondering what he might be and whither he was going, when old Captain Bartolmé Robledo, in a state of perturbation, limped toward us. Was my father at the house? he shouted. When I told him that he was, the Captain uttered a strange growl and hurried on. It was impossible for us to stay out in the open air. We followed him. And at the door of the large room we stopped. In front of us there stood the Captain, with his arms thrown out and talking in a shrill, abrupt and incoherent fashion. The fat traveller lay on a bed, that is to say, he propped himself on his left elbow;

with his right hand he was eating from a bowl. My father, on a chair, looked up most wrathfully at the old Captain, but his fingers did not cease from plucking a white hen that was between his knees.

"Gone away, entirely gone, I tell you," shouted the old Captain, "and how am I to find her?"

"If you will permit me, sir?" the traveller said. "I have but lately come into your country. My name is Eugenio Gil, once a citizen of Zaragoza in Aragon and once—alas!—librarian to the Bishop's books. It is possible—I know not—but it is possible that I can help you."

"She has gone! Her name was Enriqueta. Oh, the woman! She—she——"

"Look you," said my father, "is it right that you should come disturbing His Honour of the books in this way? And it is *my* house. You are shameless!"

But Don Eugenio spoke to the Captain very seriously. "It is what we must expect," he said. "They are the little clouds which make our sky more beautiful, and then they sail away." He dipped his leaf into the bowl again.

Don Bartolmé did not know what to say. Such reasoning as this had never yet been placed before him. Suddenly he turned and told us children to be gone. And they all crept away, except myself. I crouched down in the corner of the room, upon an empty sack of oranges. There in the shade I thought I would escape attention.

"Señor," said the Captain to Don Eugenio, "it is benevolent on your part, but—but have you ever loved a woman very much?"

The traveller did not reply.

And as the Captain started pacing up and down the room, "Oh, name of God," he moaned, "why did I

listen to her ? Now let all the creatures talk—I hold my ears. I hate them all.”

“So that, my friend,” said Don Eugenio, “you may not enter Paradise. We have in my part of the country an old saying which the Arabs left behind them. It is that a talking bird has got the Keys of Paradise.”

“Oho ! what does he talk about ? ”

“They have not found him yet,” acknowledged Don Eugenio.

The Captain gave a scoffing laugh. “A bird, forsooth ! Perhaps you have come here to find him ! ”

“And why not ? ” said Don Eugenio with a smile. “Do you believe it is no miracle that men can talk ? And if one miracle, why not another ? ”

“Oh, this bird,” exclaimed my father, holding up the half-plucked hen. “I wish I had not slain it.”

The old Captain laughed. “What foolishness ! *Mi Pedrecito*,” he said to my father, “surely you don’t think . . .” And turning round to Don Eugenio he asked, a little anxiously, “It is all nonsense, is it not ? ”

“At any rate,” said Don Eugenio, “I think the bird which has the Keys will be a very common bird.”

I had been lying on the empty sack and nobody had taken any notice of me. But at this point I was ordered by my father to be off and dress myself.

I stood up, but my head was hanging.

“My little Andalucian angel,” said Don Eugenio.

“Now,” said my father, “put your clothes on like a Christian. In the presence of this learned gentleman of books it is not fitting that you should forget your clothes.”

And, glancing up, I saw my mother at the door which led into the other room. Her mouth was open.

"Yes," quoth Don Eugenio, "I am a man of books, but not of our books of to-day. You see there is a prejudice against us if we would expose our bodies that are clean and lovely in the sight of God, whereas in books and newspapers the people may, with great impunity, expose the dirtiest of minds."

I had not thought that he could be so stern.

"Señor," my mother said, "you speak of newspapers. What do you think of those they make at Veracruz?"

He greeted her with a grave courtesy, half-rising from the bed.

"Juan is the first one of us who has read a newspaper," my mother said; "and do you think he ought to read?"

Before the traveller could reply my father rose and put his right hand on my mother's shoulder. In his left there swung the carcase of the hen. "She is the pearl of women," he explained, "but there are things she does not understand." He smiled indulgently.

My mother did not hesitate a moment. "There may be some things," she said, "that we ought not to know."

The traveller nodded.

"Here," she said, "is one of them." And going over to the painted box, in which the fire-arms and the coloured handkerchiefs and old, dried palm-leaves and some iron stirrups and some other articles were kept, she took out the small book on dancing.

"As I said," observed my father, "she is what she is, Señor, and I have never wished to have another wife. But she is what she is and very little civilized. One cannot always stay the same as were one's ancestors. Is that not so? To cultivate your garden and your oranges and coffee-plants may be extremely

meritorious, but there is something, I do not know what, a mystery, a holy sentiment, a voice of God, that sometimes urges men to rise. Is that not so? And thus I have become a breeder of these fighting-cocks."

My mother had been holding out, for everyone to see, the first page of the book. It had the picture of a lady dancing through a hoop, which hung so wonderfully in the air. And at the corners of the page there were some roses.

"Be careful with that book," said Captain Bartomé, "for it is I who gave it you."

"Of course, I know," said my mother, "that this woman looks as if she were the sister of the Holy Virgin, which they sell at the Jalapa fair for one or two or five centavos, and you are safe in your house if you have got a five-centavo one. I know this woman looks as if she were the sister, but if I should pray to her and sing to her when I am weary in my heart, what will she do? I ask."

"We have been taught," said Don Eugenio, "that there are holy ones—some who lived long ago and some in days more recent—and that if we pray to them they sometimes will appear to us. But I, no doubt, because of my innumerable sins, have never seen these holy creatures. I am even as old Bernal Diaz the Conquistador, who says that though Saint James came down on a white horse to help the Spanish soldiers at Otumba, he, because of his transgressions, could not see him. Those whom I have seen are holy people, humble people, and I do not pray to them or sing to them, but I attempt to follow their example. And if you behave as does this woman of the picture, dancing when your heart is weary, you may find it is as good as praying to the Holy Virgin."

“So that . . .” said my mother in amazement.

She could think of nothing else to say, and no one spoke, because my father and Don Bartolmé were staring at the traveller, and he was sitting upright on the bed, his feet upon the floor. He was knocking the dust out of his clothes.

“I myself, when I was at Madrid,” quoth he, “saw the sublime Coralla, who was endowed with calves of iron and with a magic power in pantomime, and she could enter on the scene and leave it as she wished, no matter what was going on. Ah me! But how she danced!”

“Señor,” said my mother, “I will brush your clothes very well for you after you have taken them off. And here at Colorado is a priest who will not let us dance as was the custom of our ancestors. He says that dancing is unseemly.”

“Then,” said Don Eugenio, “he does not know that, ever since that lamentable accident which happened to the Mariette, a dancer does not now omit to put on underclothes. She who first took this precaution was the good Camargo, who could execute six entrechats and anyhow, she never stumbled, as did Mariette, across an imitation window-frame. Ah, what is this?”

It was Gonzalez, owner of the shop, who flung himself into the house, and his queer, smallpoxed face was working agitatedly; his little eyes were flashing in his head. “That Enriqueta,” he began, “has come to me. She wants to live with me! Just as I was half sleeping in the shop my woman enters. And from now . . .”

“For all these months . . .” said the old Captain. He did not seem angry, but very sad.

“Oh well, she doesn’t want you,” said Gonzalez.

"Long ago and long ago I asked her to come to me, because you are not a fighting soldier, but a lame old man. This Captain," he explained to Don Eugenio, "is a soldier such as we have many of in Mexico. When it became a question to throw out the Spaniards, forty, fifty years ago, there was every kind of honour paid to the insurgent heroes: garlands round their necks and money for their pockets and the perfumed girls of every village for them, just as if they had been Spanish landlords of the olden time. Yes, all this was for the heroes, this or death. Many of them fell into the hands of our oppressors and were slaughtered. Many others were more careful, like this Captain, who . . ."

"I have been in bloody battles," said the Captain, with his hand upon his heart, "I have indeed."

"Oh, hear him! That," Gonzalez cried, "is what I said to Enriqueta, that he was of those who like the honours but will never find their way into a battle. He is like those peaceful soldiers whom we also have, señor, in Mexico; as fast as possible they sell the powder and the guns to their opponents. That is how they work for a disarmament and peace."

"It seems to me that I have come to a great country," said Don Eugenio.

"And this man was about the age of fifty years when he became an officer. He stole the uniform of a captain and that is how . . ."

"But the man was dead," exclaimed Don Bartolmé indignantly.

"And then," pursued Gonzalez, "he comes here to Colorado and he lives upon the sunlight and on what we give him, and he takes our Enriqueta. But from now she is my woman. She is mine!" He grinned delightedly at all of us.

"Will you be gone," my father said, "you with your vile, indecent life? Here is a gentleman of books, and you disturb him with a story out of life. May yellow fever fall upon you!"

This was not the way in which my father usually spoke, but so much was he in earnest that he made a movement as if he was going to throw the hen into Gonzalez's face.

The shopkeeper had never thought that he would be received in this way. "*Ca!*" said he, "I have more of politeness. I will not wish that the yellow fever fall upon this gentleman. But if it were to fall, I think his books would not assist him."

"That is very probable," quoth Don Eugenio, "for when the Greeks advised us to suspend beneath our chins a piece of vellum with some words from Homer's Iliad, they had in mind not to prevent the yellow fever, whereof they were ignorant, but other fevers. May I hope," he added to Gonzalez, "that you will have many years of health and all felicity with the good lady Enriqueta?"

"I remain at the disposal of your Honour," said Gonzalez, as he backed towards the door. "If only," said he, "this Pedro does not take her from me."

"I hope," said my father, in a trembling voice, "that I shall never see you or the woman again. And if I were you I'd keep her in a cage."

"Oh, as for that," he laughed, "she'll run away from me as fast as Captain Bartolmé can run." And seizing the old fellow by the arm he pulled him out to the verandah. "*Holà!*" he cried, "you don't want a cage for some of them. When the bird is dead you can leave the cage open!" And he made off, with his arm round the limping Don Bartolmé.

His last words may have been directed against my

mother, but nevertheless my father turned to Don Eugenio and said, "Those are the people of Colorado. And after you are gone I shall consort with them again. It is a miserable life. And thus it will continue till I die and then for Juanito, my son whom you see here, it will be the same. But I must send him out into the world." And he looked sideways at Don Eugenio.

"If you would like me," said the man of books, "to take him to Jalapa?"

"Señor," said my mother, "when I was outside the room I heard you say that you are not a rich man. We have also not as much as the most rich of all, but God has smiled upon the business of my husband. We have always a sufficiency of onions and brown beans and coffee, which is very good, and animal meat and good pineapples and plenty of corn and also cigars and papayas with agreeable juice, and therefore if your Honour will stay with us . . ."

"Thank you very much," said Don Eugenio, "but I am bound for Jalapa, to the house of a Noahcite. At Veracruz I heard of him, and I believe that in the course of his researches he will find me useful. I have wares that one may often take to market and not sell. There may, in fact, not be another man of all your country who will want me."

"Why then did you come to Mexico?" asked my father. And when he noticed that a shadow was on Don Eugenio's face he begged him not to answer.

"As for Juanito, who is not without instruction," said the traveller, "and who evidently is inquisitive—a more important attribute—I shall be glad to take him with me if his mother will consent."

"You have not yet mentioned," said my father, "if you love the fighting-cocks."

He held his hands up in denial.

"Well then," said my father, very resolutely, "I will pay in something else, or, if you like, in coin. Yes, so be it."

Don Eugenio smiled. "Once in my native town," he said, "I heard a story of a lad who was brought up inside a monastery. And he never saw a woman till he went one day to market in a neighbouring village, with a monk. He saw some girls there, and he asked what they might be. The monk said they were geese. And when the boy was back inside the monastery he seemed very mournful, and the monk enquired if he was sick or weary. 'I should like to eat some of those geese,' said the boy."

"And what," asked my father with great earnestness, "what did he do?"

Said Don Eugenio, "I told the story as an illustration of the charm of ignorance and the peril of it. And perhaps on the whole it is better if I let your boy go with me to the market, though I cannot promise that he will not be a sadder boy when he returns. The money which you kindly offer I will also take, for I will earn it conscientiously. As for the education, it will not be in accordance with his tender years. In fact, it will be far beyond what other boys attempt."

My father stroked my hair. "But go," he said suddenly, "go and dress yourself."

"Tell me," said my mother, "what will he do after he knows all that? What will he do?"

"*Que hombre!*" said my father. "In other lands it may be like this or like that, but in Mexico there are some people underneath and some on the top. It is more pleasant to be on the top, and the way to accomplish that is by being a learned man."

“ Oh happy country ! ” interjected Don Eugenio. “ What I was going to say was that so much of what he overhears he will not understand, but I think it is better that a boy should wander in the dark if he will grope about, than that he should be always lolling in the sunlight. I believe that you do well to let me have your son, although you do not know me.”

“ But, indeed, I know you,” said my father, “ and besides we all of us are in the hands of God.”

“ Amen,” said Don Eugenio ; “ and now I think it suitable that I should say a prayer even if I am no priest.”

My father and my mother went down on their knees, and so did I.

“ This lad,” quoth he—his hands fell rather heavily upon my head—“ this lad is now committed to the care of me, Eugenio Gil, Thy wicked servant. And I pray that Thou wilt mercifully guide me so that I may lead him well. Thou wilt not blame us in that we have been impetuous, for it is Thou who knewest of it since the world began that we should meet and that we should, for good or evil, but I hope for good, set out together.”

“ Excuse me,” said my mother, “ I am not a learned one. I have not understood.”

“ And what of that ? ” called my father, angrily. “ Will you not let His Honour proceed with the beautiful prayer. God knows very well what he is talking about.”

Don Eugenio began again : “ It is my purpose so to train this boy that the small seed of education which he has may blossom into flower and be to him immeasurable riches and perhaps a source of earthly riches also. Here the seed would certainly be choked by the great Ignorance around him ; on the other

hand, O God, I will endeavour not to blind with too much education, which is only seeing further and more terribly into the forest-labyrinths of Ignorance, I will endeavour not to blind what of Old Wisdom may be in the boy. Instead of worthless newspapers and books on dancing he shall study our good language and the Latin language, so that soon, in a humble capacity, he will be able to assist, I have no doubt, in portions of the work that the Noahcite of Jalapa will set before me. The idea of an assistant did not come to me, and thus I have not had to wait for Juan during anxious days. I thank Thee."

"We have waited a long time for you," said my father, "but now you have come. It is beautiful, beautiful."

Don Eugenio looked at him amiably. "In other circumstances, my dear host," he said, "I should have knocked in a very woeful condition at the house of that Noahcite. And, by the way, I have not told you much about him—it is owing to the fact that I myself have only heard a little. He appears to be a hermit."

"Juanito will be safe with you," said my father.

"And I ought to tell you more about myself."

"All that can wait until to-morrow," said my father. "I am going now to get some fireworks from Gonzalez, such as we have orders to send up when there is a most high procession of the Church or when there is a grand procession for a newly-chosen Governor of Veracruz, our State." And having spoken thus, my father rose. "This day shall not be soon forgotten," he declared.

"I think we shall remember it more joyfully in years to come," said Don Eugenio, "if you do not allow Gonzalez to send off the fireworks himself."

CHAPTER II

ON the next day, Don Eugenio told the story of his life to us. He and my father and myself had walked a little distance out of Colorado, to a grove of palms. I had been very often with my comrades in that grove and often, when it happened to be my turn, as a desperate Spanish governor who knows not how he will escape from the encircling, hidden patriots ; but I had never been so thrilled before. And Don Eugenio began :

“ At Zaragoza I was born,” he said, “ and at an early age I found myself inside the seminary. Zaragoza has a restless, active population ; but my family, both such of them as lived in the town, and such as plied their trade among the mountains, were considered to be rather independent ; and it had been settled that I should become a priest, in expiation of their naughtiness. But my instructors at the seminary were, in a short time, as little pleased as I was, and they told my parents that there was within me something, if not diabolical, at any rate entirely different from what the Church demanded. As an instance of my intractable spirit, they informed my parents that when I was told of God’s great anger with the Israelites for worshipping the golden calf I was not, like the other boys, at all impressed. ‘ Anybody else,’ I said, ‘ would have laughed at them.’ I happen to remember this one out of the long catalogue of my transgressions ; but the priests, when they returned me,

said that they were sorry, for there seemed to be a studious side to my bad character.

“My parents thereupon dispatched me to an uncle who was one of the most celebrated smugglers of Aragon. His band of ten or twelve devoted followers were very kind to me, not so much because I was the nephew of their chief as that I had been in a seminary, for they looked upon the Church with reverence, and were on good terms with the large majority of mountain curates. Each of them, my uncle and his pretty daughter, and the other smugglers, used to wear as a protection some sort of a rosary or sacred relic, and the medal of Saint EUGRACIA, which the priests had given me, was one which all the band admired. I know not whether I should have developed into a proficient smuggler or if I should have grown weary of the charm, the moon-lit rides, the ambuscades, the plunder, the good fellowship. I know not if my conscience would have ever told me that it was a wicked life—in common with most other Spaniards we looked on ourselves as men who swindled the intolerable swindle of the fiscal regulations—I do not know if I should have been a merry and rich smuggler at this moment, instead of as you see me now; but I was scarcely a few months in the profession when, unluckily, I killed a customs-officer. I found him with Antonia, my cousin, in his foul embrace, and I think that every member of the band would have done just the same as I did, though my cousin cursed me at the time most bitterly, and told me that she almost had persuaded him to join our band. At any rate, she there and then commanded me to go back to my parents, and I did so, feeling very much disgraced.

“They had been looking forward to me coming back in great prosperity to help them in old age, and they

were very violent. Now I had thrown away, they said, the second chance which, as good parents, they had offered me. It was upon myself henceforward that I must rely. They turned me out, and then my wanderings through Aragon and the Castiles began in earnest. On the way I had occasion to be first the clerk to an apothecary, then a travelling actor, then the servant of a man who held a lottery at all the fairs, and then I was a stable-man, a baker, a water-carrier. I will not say that I was to be pitied on account of the lowliness of some of these occupations ; they were honest, which I cannot say for two others which engaged me. Well, I had arrived at my twenty-second year, and then I saw one afternoon, a girl drive past me in Madrid who changed the whole course of my life. She put into my heart such longing and such tenderness that on the next day, very early, I went to a stall of books and begged the goodman there to let me serve him. I had more and more avoided anything which had to do with my old seminary days—among the attributes of that regretted, more and more regretted, time were books. And now, with that enchanting girl upon my heart, I could resist no longer. It happened that the bookseller was not in a position to employ me, but a friend of his required a new assistant and I flung myself most ardently into the world of books, which up to then, of course, I scarcely knew at all. I cannot say if I should have become as great a lover of the books if it had not been that I vowed with all my soul that I adored them ; but the weather-beaten books of chivalry were splendid, and the brown piles of old play-bills and the fat religious books, such as those of Juan Nieremberg of Madrid—the ‘ Life of Saint Ignacius of Loyola ’ was one of them, the ‘ Tract concerning the Beauty of

God ' was another—and Quevedo, of whom we had a translation issued at Rouen in 1641, by Jacques Besongne, with a very ornamental device on the title-page ; and we had a book which was published in Flanders, all about the war—it was by Carlos Coloma, the Spanish General, whose language was so clear and lofty ; by the side of it we had one which had been composed by the Most Illustrious Juan Coloma, Viceroy and Captain-General for His Majesty in Sardinia, and this book we could never sell, although it was the first one printed in that island and although the Most Illustrious proclaimed in his Introduction that the book would confer so much of benefit and honour on the Kingdom, and indeed it may at that time have been in request, since the Most Illustrious announces that unauthorized ones who purvey it will have every copy confiscated and be liable to pay a fine of five and twenty ducats—it was a little book in poetry about the Passion of our Lord ; and then we had ' The Lugubrious Nights ' by Colonel José Cadalso, who was killed in 1782 by the English at the Siege of Gibraltar. In that book of his he had imitated the ' Night Thoughts ' of Dr. Young, an Englishman—I found them all delicious and I even read them, while I watched our thievish customers.

“ But they eluded me, the scoundrels, more than once, so that the owner of the stall said I would ruin him. He was a philanthropic man ; I might, he said, go to his lodging with him every night and there read all the books I wanted, but if I should go to any other bookseller he would inform him that for watching I was very useless.

“ So I found myself in a condition worse than I had ever known ; I couldn't bear it in Madrid. You may think it was foolish of me, but I left the town.”

"*Pues*, in the towns," said my father; "one has many thieves, as you yourself observed."

"At Alcalá de Henares I fell in with a foreign innkeeper, a Catalan; and as I had eaten for two days nothing but a little rye bread and garlic I consented to assist him in selling a cat for a hare, as the saying is."

My father turned his head away.

"Yes, yes, I know that it is not to be excused," said Don Eugenio, "and there is only one thing which consoles me. There in Alcalá amid the travellers whom I helped the man to fleece—himself, he could not read nor write—were many, I am certain, who were wicked people, so that it was seemly for them to be punished. God have mercy upon me, a sinner."

"Amen," said my father. "But did any of the wicked people find you out?"

"It was not on that account," said Don Eugenio, "that I went from there. Of course, I longed to be with books again, but how it was to come about I could not see. And what I did was to continue at my work and trust in God. And He rewarded me far, far beyond my merits. A sweet angel came to Alcalá; she once had been the good wife of a common soldier who became a duke and left her when the Queen cast eyes upon him. This occurred some years ago and the poor woman was compelled to keep herself in hiding. Nowhere could she turn for aid; her life was the most miserable that you can imagine; but at last the Church, offended with the haughty duke, resolved to help her, and they passed her out of Spain. She did not travel in the public coach, as is the custom of our highest, but in a black carriage with a trusty bodyguard. And when she halted for the night with us at Alcalá she noticed, in the midst of

her anxieties, that I was looking very miserable. And she took me with her, on the next day, to my native town, where she had letters for the Bishop. This is how I came into the service of that well-beloved man, the Bishop of Zaragoza.

“You have heard, perhaps, of Saint Eugracia and her marvels? Well, a portion of her liver is resorted to, at Zaragoza, by the faithful who are incommoded by some pain around the stomach; while a tumour in the neck, a *lamparone*, yields, they tell me, to the oil of Saint Eugracia’s lamp. At any rate, I had been perfectly familiar from my childhood with the reputation of this holy woman, whose adherents and their friends came always in a ceaseless stream to Zaragoza. I did not suppose that I myself should ever have much traffic with her, but the Bishop said that I had just arrived at the good time to write her life. He had determined that it should be written, since it would be doubtless very edifying, and he was an amiable man and a grandee who did not love the learned doctors half as much as the unlearned people. All the manuscripts about ecclesiastical affairs in Aragon, and other parts, which filled his library he did not care about, but he was much devoted to our Saint, and so for nearly twenty years he nourished me and was my friend while these investigations were in progress.

“Now and then I could inform him that I had discovered something else about the lady and her eighteen martyred comrades, but it was not easy to learn much, and as the years went on I lived a good deal at the only Zaragoza bookstall that was just outside my former seminary, and when I was at the Bishop’s house I gave more time and more time to the manuscripts. The catalogue I was compiling of them gave him pleasure, and he promised me that, after I

had written it in Latin, he would send it to be bound at Barcelona in dull red morocco with the edges gilt and gauffred, with his arms emblazoned in the centre of the cover, and inside a painted geometrical design ; there should be a symmetrical and elegant ground-work of tears. On the title-page, he said, I could describe myself as his librarian. He was so kind to me that I lamented having ascertained so little as to Saint Eugracia.

“ I visited my parents now and then—they both died in this period when I was back in Zaragoza—but there was a feeling of constraint between us. When my uncle, who became one of the richest smugglers of all Aragon, received them for the gorgeous nuptials of his daughter, he enquired about myself and the profession I had chosen. But my parents told me, somewhat curtly, that it had been quite impossible to answer him with accuracy if it was not to excite his great amazement and, maybe, his sense of humour. I was like a priest, they said to him, I helped the Bishop and was growing corpulent. My pretty cousin asked if I had got a woman, but they said that I did not concern myself with them. And,” quoth Don Eugenio, “ I have in this tale of my life not thought it necessary to repeat the passages of love ; I did this for the reason that, so far as I know, they have had no influence on my career, with the exception of that girl I met one afternoon of autumn in Madrid. With your permission I will say no word about the others, not because they are of slight importance, but because they are too sacred or too little sacred.”

My father had some small cigars inside his hat. He took out one for Don Eugenio, he lighted it and gave it him, and then he chose another for himself.

“ At last the Bishop died,” said Don Eugenio,

“and his successor chased me out into the world. And thus I came to Mexico.”

“If that man in Jalapa whom you talked of should not want to have you,” said my father, “then I hope that you will always live with us.”

CHAPTER III

ALTHOUGH I was a little boy when Don Eugenio came and took me with him to Jalapa, and although we only lived together for about a year, I seem to have him always with me. Here in Mexico you have to be the most secluded of all hermits if the everlasting strife and treacheries and turmoil do not sometimes make you wish to be in a more peaceful country ; but I live with Don Eugenio and I am happy. And he lives with me as he does not live, I am sure, with anybody else, and when I vanish he will vanish also.

It is terrible to think that all this laughter and gay learning and benevolence will fade out of the world. And it is strange to think that probably they would have faded sooner if the Bishop's librarian had not encountered a small, naked Indian boy. But I am far more troubled and more serious about these things than Don Eugenio would have been—it is the nature of my people to be serious, if we reflect at all. He used to say that, speaking with the most profound humility, he did not think that God would like it if one always treated Him with seriousness, for, surely, in the works of God one could discern amid the grandeur no small waywardness and wistfulness and mirth, so that one could suppose in God a wish not to be veiled in awe, but to be treated with a loving friendliness, with a complete familiarity. He was quite firm in his belief that God could laugh at men. I think he used to laugh at God, and he was a much better man than

many who have tonsured heads. And if it is the case that God can laugh at us, I think He had the last laugh over Don Eugenio. Instead of letting him live in a Latin country and at ease among his fellows, He made a poor wanderer of him, a solitary man who did not really give his confidence to anyone until it was to me !

While he was at Zaragoza in the Bishop's library, he could not tell them what he thought about these matters ; he would certainly have been expelled, if nothing worse. The Inquisition was distasteful to him, but when he was ultimately sent away the only manuscripts that he could lay his hands on happened to be certain papers of the Council of the General Inquisition of Spain, together with a few Reports of the Inquisitors of Aragon and one or two more manuscripts of that kind.

Don Eugenio was the sort of man who does not like to lead a solitary life. The old philosophers and Christian Fathers whom he found on Zaragoza book-stalls were to him as much a joy as the profane books of Madrid ; but he was not so wise and pure a man, he said, as to be satisfied with lofty books.

I ought to have begun at the beginning. As we walked back from the palm grove, where he told us all that story of his life, he settled with my father on the money that he should receive for giving me instruction. And he promised that he never would neglect me. "It is wonderful," he said, "when I remember the rich students who came riding and the poor ones who came walking very painfully into the town of Zaragoza in the autumn ; those who ride on mules, sometimes two and even three on the same animal, may not be opulent, but anyhow they have a green serge parcel of belongings and they listen to the poor ones who become

their menials in the town, for otherwise the ragged fellows could not stay there to absorb the Stoic teachings or the Treatise of Pope Gregory the Great upon the Book of Job or whatsoever else it is they want to study. When I walked up here from Veracruz I thought that I was not so fortunate as those poor students, seeing that the Noahcite perhaps—who knows?—he may be dead or . . .”

“Venerable sir,” put in my father, “you shall have a mule, just like those other students. You and Juanito, each of you shall have his mule.”

“My friend,” said Don Eugenio, “will you believe it when I tell you that in Salamanca, which abounded with apothecaries, male and female, there was one called Clara, who possessed prescriptions that were guaranteed to tame the luckless stomachs of the students who could not appease them, save with pestilential food?”

My father clenched his fist. “The people who allow that kind of thing, they should be slain themselves,” he cried. “It causes me to think that everyone is wicked, if there are some men like that. Oh, devils!”

“Well,” said Don Eugenio, “perhaps I also have not much esteem for men, but I have still less for myself.”

He was not one of those who decorate themselves with crimes that are as out of place upon them as a multitude of stars upon a dull, grey sky. My Don Eugenio was the simplest of all men; he held that neither God nor yet the Devil had conferred upon him any special decorations. He believed that he was undistinguishable from the crowd of ordinary men. And he was more disposed to think unfavourably of himself than of the others, since he often thought that with regard to them he might be wrong.

It is presumptuous on my part, surely, to attempt to give an accurate description of him. Just as well, I think, could a poor stone enveloped in the fog give an account of what the fog is like upon its frontier, with the sunbeams painting it. There is not much of Don Eugenio, I fear, that I was capable of seeing. And to speak about his erudition merely—which is not the side of him that I most love and therefore can best understand—he was forever strengthening his arguments with something that a great or famous man had uttered or had done. The documents which he had taken from the Bishop's library were very few, and they were all devoted, more or less, to matters of the Church; but in his head my splendid master seemed to have another and more ample library. I used to wonder if he was disturbed about the scattering, by death, of all his knowledge; but he certainly was very tranquil when he thought about his body's death. I am not sure that he would have amended any of his ways in order to avoid a punishment in the hereafter, but he earnestly maintained that we are punished now. He would have scorned to claim the least excuse. His errors and his frailties he did not cherish, so he said, for any higher motive—"I have seen," quoth he, "some people cultivate their sins as if they had been rebel flags to wave at the opponent." He cultivated his because he liked them.

During the two days that he remained at Colorado there was no one who insisted more on being with him than the priest. A man degenerated, said the priest, in such a miserable village; one must lose no chance of intercourse with reasonable folk. But in the night when both of them were vehemently singing first a Spanish student's song, then a religious chant, and

then another student's song, which made the village snigger each time that it was repeated, Don Eugenio did all he could to sing more loudly than his boon companion, in a noble effort to preserve the old priest's dignity.

There was much sorrow in the village on that morning when we rode away. Gonzalez and his Enriqueta, the old Captain and the mumbling priest, and several other people walked beside the mule of Don Eugenio; my parents held the bridle of my own—the bridles and the saddles, and the necks of Don Eugenio and me were hung with pretty garlands. But the only ones of the procession who did not seem to be sad were Enriqueta and my master. She was making fun of the old Captain, and my master, with his head thrown back—not paying even slight attention to his mule—sang a brave hymn in Latin.

* * * * * * *

Two days have gone since I put down those words. It is amid my dearest memories, the picture of him riding through the trees and singing—he alone of all the company. We could not understand the song, but as he sang it all our blood ran riot and our sadness disappeared. We felt that we were soldiers marching to a field of triumph and we started singing. Loud and shrill the voices—that of the old Captain was the loudest; he rolled forth a lover's melody which ought to have been murmured. But he did not hinder me from hearing my dear mother's voice, which seemed to sing despite herself. The blue and yellow flowers that were hanging from the trees, you saw them shake—they wanted to be like the butterflies and dance around us.

When at last my mother and my father and the

rest of them decided to go back, and when they said farewell to us, I do not think that anyone was sad. At all events I am quite sure that in the afternoon as Don Eugenio and I rode up towards Jalapa he was speaking meditatively about us both.

"In one way I regret," he said, "that I accepted money from your father—I shall have to keep you with me. And your mother will not give permission, I am sure, if we should want to go beyond Jalapa. We may quarrel with the Noahcite and leave his service—I should not be much surprised if he is a pedantic fellow—and if we remain there in the town, where the commodities are sure to be expensive, we shall starve. But no, I am too mournful. This is your first journey."

"Let me starve if I may journey on with you!" I cried.

"My son," said Don Eugenio—he bent a little forward and away from me, to stroke the right ear of his mule—"I have not come to Mexico for such a reason as caused Coelius Apicius to go to Africa, though it must be admitted that innumerable men have travelled to far distant countries on account of a much baser object than to ascertain if crayfish on the coast of Africa is more delectable than such as one discovers at Minturnæ. While I do not pretend to have the energy of this good man, yet I maintain, as strongly as did Aristotle, that we go in hunger at our peril. In the writings of that most august philosopher you will find all about it. Some day we shall study Aristotle. And we must not starve."

I pointed out a little clearing by the roadside where we could eat some of the tamales and the oranges and bits of chicken and dried fish and other things my mother had packed up for us. And we had not

been there a long time when I heard the footsteps of a horse ; upon it was a man, a tall, young soldier, and behind him was a woman, the most beautiful whom I had ever seen, although her eyes were worn with weeping. She was fastened to the soldier by a thick rope, but she did not look as if she would have dared to run away. A flower or two was in the black hair which hung down beyond the upturned portion of the saddle.

The soldier in the splendid uniform waved a salute to Don Eugenio ; the horse stopped of its own accord.

" Young man," said Don Eugenio, " I do not know your business, but it seems to me you have been going further than is very wise for one day."

" I am the Lieutenant Esteban Fuentes, aide-de-camp to His Excellency the Governor of Veracruz," he said with truculence. " How is a man who rides upon a mule to know what is and what is not wise for a horse ? "

My master got up from the ground and bowed superbly.

" I am the student Eugenio Gil, ex-librarian to His Lordship the Bishop of Zaragoza in Aragon," he said, " and it is by the faded flowers in this lady's hair that I observe how many leagues you must have covered."

" You are very wise," the young lieutenant sneered.

" No doubt," said Don Eugenio, " we men are wiser than all other living creatures, but for my part I am not so certain of the reason. It may be, as the philosopher imagines, because a man hath very little head in respect of the proportion of the body. Or do you suppose it is because the blood of man is the most subtle, pure and clean ? "

" Yes, yes, but I am hungry. I have ridden a good distance. Will you give me some of your provisions ? "

Don Eugenio, who had approached the new arrivals, stepped back to the spot where we had laid the food and took up in his arms some of the choicest things. He carried them to the young officer who clearly had not eaten for a long time, having calculated I suppose, that he would come across a village, and the village having shown itself inclined to help his captive. But although he was so ravenous he gave, from time to time, a handful to the girl.

My master was quite near him, with one hand in fact upon the saddle. While he stood there he continued that most profitable discourse. "The blood of man," he said, "is the nutrition, and so there is great difference, you will admit, whether it be cold or hot, thin or thick, troubled or clear."

The soldier went on with his eating very noisily, but in the dark eyes of the girl there was great friendliness.

"Or," continued Don Eugenio, "is it by reason of the constitution of his blood that man has a most perfect sense of feeling?"

From the soldier came a grunt.

"Because they have soft flesh they are endowed with sharp and rapid wit, and they whose flesh and skin are thicker and grosser, they are dull and slow." While he was saying this his fingers were upon the rope, untying it. "Surely," he said, "in a soft body the spirit of the soul is the more easily infused; and doth more willingly and speedily disclose itself; and on the other hand, the hardness and thickness is a hindrance which prevents the pure clean blood, whereby the spirits are engendered, from being carried from place to place; for unto every man is given a certain portion of spirit to work withal." As he spoke these words he pulled her suddenly from off the horse.

"What do you mean? What is this?" cried the lieutenant. "May the thunder of God . . ."

"You have treated her badly," said Don Eugenio, in a cold, stern voice.

"Now say your prayers!"

The girl was moaning and my master reassured her. Then he turned to the lieutenant who had drawn his sword and evidently was enraged.

"It is most opportune to pray," said Don Eugenio, "for I must render thanks to God, who has enabled me to set this woman free. Young man, when you are older you will look back to this day with sorrow, seeing that amid your other lapses you let slip the opportunity of joining in this prayer."

I somehow did not think he would cut off the head of Don Eugenio, because he seemed to cower beneath my master's words. And I can see him, as if it were yesterday, with his long sword held down beside his leg. I thought the fiery spirit had gone out of him just as the flash of sunlight from the sword.

"If you desire it," said my master to the girl, "I will go with you to your home."

She sank down at his side and kissed his hand.

"But if you would prefer," he said, "to see the city of Jalapa, which is where I hope to stay awhile, then you can safely come with me. No doubt the good nuns have a convent there."

"I do not know," she murmured.

The young officer was quickly getting over his embarrassment and, with a laugh I did not like, "We're all good friends," he cried. "*Carajo!* but it is too hot to quarrel. We can all of us," said he, as he dismounted, "we can all of us spend half-an-hour in sleep."

The girl was clinging to my master, who put his

right arm around her. And as she looked up at him she saw a smile which marvellously changed her troubles into smiling.

"Would you like to tell me," he began, "what is your name and where you come from?"

"Yes, I am Maria." She was like a sunbeam which is happy in the foliage of a splendid tree.

"My little girl," he said, "if the good nuns receive you I will send a letter to your parents. They will not be anxious, I am sure, when I explain to them."

Maria looked as if she had not one anxiety in all the world.

"I think it is most fortunate," he said, "that the lieutenant brought you from your village. He did not intend to do a worthy deed, no more than did the Devil to Saint Guy. But now you have been taken from your slothful village, even as our little friend here," and he indicated me. "And if you return when you have finished with the convent and you settle down at home, it will be something for you to remember."

"Yes," she said, a little dreamily and sadly.

"On the other hand, if you would like to be a nun, if you have the vocation . . ." and he also looked a little wistful.

The sun was beating down upon us all, and so my master stepped aside to where the moss lay underneath the trees. Maria did not leave him, and as he sat down she sat down also. As for us, the officer and me, we followed them—we seemed to be spectators of it—and we stood there, watching them.

"We really need not talk about the final vows," said Don Eugenio, "because, for one thing, I am never much disposed to think of what is very far ahead.

But you must not imagine that they will compel you to remain."

She nodded, very gravely, with her little head. The faded flowers did not look more serious than she was.

"I believe," said Don Eugenio, "that I shall be permitted now and then to see you. If you find it irksome I will get you out and send you home. But now we must not be so melancholy." He was smiling at her. "After all, it has gone well to-day."

She sat with trembling eyelids.

"Let us think no more about to-morrow. Can you sing a song to us or shall we make our thanksgiving to God?"

And then, with a subdued but passionate voice, "I won't go into any convent," she declared.

He gazed at her. I thought he frowned. "Maria! What am I to do with you? Poor little girl," he said.

"No, no—I will not be a nun . . . I really cannot be a nun," she pleaded.

"You can always leave the convent, I am sure, while you are on probation. But if you will not go there at all, it will be, I confess, a trouble to me. You must not be running up and down Jalapa by yourself." He took a hand of hers and patted it. "You see," he said, "I must look after you."

"But—but——" she shuddered. She drew nearer to him. "Oh, you don't understand."

He was evidently in distress. "My little one," he said, "there is nobody who understands better than I do that the life ecclesiastic is not for all of us. Have faith in me—I wish you well, so well—only have faith in me."

"Why don't you take her?" cried the young lieutenant.

Don Eugenio made a kind of roaring sound. He would have spoken if Maria had not thrown herself into his bosom. Then he acted for a time as if the officer and I were far away. And as they clung to one another they were laughing, weeping, sighing.

It was she who was the first to speak. "I am so glad," she said.

My master's face was like a scarlet sun when it is blazing through the mists above Jalapa. "I have dreamed of you for many years," he said.

"Now always, always I will be with you."

"Ah, yes . . ." and then his eye met that of the lieutenant. "Sir!" he said, "this lady and myself are going to be married. God in heaven! Otherwise I should have merely saved her from one sinking raft to fling her on another—which may be the life of man," he said, "but it shall not be her life, in so far as I arrange it."

Not long afterwards we had resumed the journey. The lieutenant rode in front and then the mule on which Maria sat with me and then my master's mule. He would have dearly loved to take her on his animal, and she desired it also, but beyond all other Spaniards I have ever seen he loved the beasts of burden.

Now and then, between the vegetation which hung down, as if it were a waterfall, from every tree, one had a glimpse of the blue mountains, range on range; and towards the evening, as the colour of the sky grew faint, there was no difference between it and the mountains of the topmost range. But the crimson snows of Orizaba, high above all other mountains, made me feel—I knew not why—a conqueror. Of course, I had seen all these things, the gorgeous forests and the winding road, the distant ranges and great

Orizaba, I had seen them many hundred times—and yet, until that day, I had not seen them.

Sometimes the old Spanish road was not in good repair, so that the mule was forced to jump from stone to stone. At other times I slumbered in the saddle, partly owing, I suppose, to the fatigue and partly to the strange excitements of the day. Maria spoke a little, saying that she was so glad that Don Eugenio had rescued her, and also that it would be beautiful for us three to be friends. She turned her head and answered Don Eugenio from time to time, and once when I woke up—it was near nightfall—he was talking with a tremble in his voice. I think it was about Jalapa he was talking.

Then she asked him what the Devil did with poor Saint Guy.

“Well, he was beneficial, though he did not mean to be so,” said my master. “It offended him to see the way in which the young man served his church. From early morning Guy was busy there: he swept the spiders from the vault, he swept the floor, attended to the altars and the shrines, in fact he was so much devoted to the church, which was that of Our Lady of Laeken, that it is most probable he would have stayed there all his life and that he never would have been admitted to the hierarchy of saints. But then the Devil in disguise approached him and persuaded him to be a man of business, seeing that this would enable him, the Devil said, to gain much money for his parents and the needy. But the Devil was frustrated, for the young man had very soon made a failure of his business, whereupon he recognized his fault and was exceedingly regretful. He went back into the church, but as a penance he now took upon himself a task more useful or, at any rate, more

prominent: he travelled both to Rome and to Jerusalem, he was a pilgrim to the celebrated shrines of Christendom, and he conducted other pilgrims, such as Wondulph, to their satisfaction. Far and near, wherever he was seen, his merits were acclaimed and ultimately he was canonized."

I do not know how many miles we rode. When I awakened for the last time it was owing to the angry voice of Don Eugenio and that of an official who, with an uplifted torch, was standing just beside our mules. His eye was glittering as much as any of the buttons on his uniform.

At first I did not know what they were shouting at each other for, and then I found that Don Eugenio would not agree to pay for bringing the remainder of our food into the town. Later on my master told me that he had resisted on account of a wild devil who was in him, but especially because he wanted to be grand before Maria.

"I command you, do you hear me?" cried the man in uniform. "You either pay what it is right to pay or else go back along that road. And, for the rest, I care not if your food will choke you or if you go wandering about the land in hunger. What I know is that unless you pay you shall not come into my town."

And then I did not think how bold I was, because I only thought that I must help my master: "Aristotle said," quoth I, repeating words which I had learned from Don Eugenio, "Aristotle said we go in hunger at our peril."

"And I say," the man shouted, "that it is I who collect the dues at this office. Do you think that I care what anybody else says?"

I was not afraid of him, because my master's hand

was on my shoulder. And I think that Don Eugenio would then have paid the money if our friend the young lieutenant had not at this moment ridden forward from the darkness where he had been looking on. He wished the officer good-night and our procession passed into the town.

CHAPTER IV

THE lieutenant said that he would tell us all about the place, but there was nothing in this neighbourhood, he said, at the beginning of the town. I tried to look at every house, but I saw hardly anything, nor did Maria, since it was so dark. What I could see, by means of the few lights inside the windows, were great iron bars. Some people, who were wrapped in cloaks, went past the houses rather hurriedly ; if one of them had stopped, perhaps I should have screamed—so did the iron bars affect me. But as we climbed up towards the middle of the town, with here a church and there another large black building, I was much relieved to find more lights ; the people also were not hurrying. And in the plaza one could see their faces, which were friendly. They were strolling round and round the plaza and I should have liked to stop and look at them, as well as at the palace of the governor with its arcades ; and at the other side, up many steps, was the cathedral. But we rode on across the plaza and we turned off to the right, down a steep, curving road. At last we halted at a big house. The lieutenant had dismounted and was talking to my master.

“ Will you still insist,” he said, “ on going to this man to-night ? He will not be prepared, as I have told you. In the barracks or some hostelry . . . ”

“ You do not know him,” said my master.

The lieutenant crossed himself. “ At this hour of the night who knows what he is doing ? Very likely,” said the terrified lieutenant, “ he—he . . . ”

“Come now,” said my master, as he slid from the mule, “he will be a most sympathetic person. He will take me to his arms.”

“Yes, yes, and carry you to Hell. He is in league with Satan. You—they have not told you what goes on in this accursed house. If you will only wait until to-morrow—I am really fond of you—if you will wait until to-morrow and enquire of anyone who is intelligent.”

My master helped Maria and myself to get on to the ground. “Behold,” he said to the lieutenant, with a little smile of mischief, “our Maria, who is not without experience of being carried off, does not seem to be much afraid.”

“Oh no,” she laughed.

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders and he scowled. “It will be my turn,” he declared, “to laugh to-morrow. Fare you well.” He saw that Don Eugenio was knocking at the heavy door, and instantly he strode away, pulling his horse after him. He did not turn round even once to see what happened to us.

Then my master noticed that Maria’s face was overcast. “Brave little girl,” said he, “what is it in your head?”

“About the mattress,” she replied, “for I have never slept upon another one. We are but Indians, at home,” she said, “but we have got three mattresses and one of them is mine. If only he had let me bring it on the horse!”

“But think of the poor horse,” said Don Eugenio.

“I think of you,” she said.

The door was being opened and the face of an astonished man, a servant, peered at us out of the darkness.

"Will you tell Don Arcadio," my master said, "that I, the ex-librarian of the Bishop of Zaragoza in Aragon, have just arrived? I shall be very glad to see him."

There was no change in the servant's swarthy face.

"These are two friends of mine," said Don Eugenio. "Now be so good as to inform your master."

"Let it be so," said the man resignedly. "I hope that good will come of it." He turned and started walking back into the darkness of the house.

My master raised his voice, in order that this foolish man should tell us where to put the mules. And he informed us that there was indeed a stable, a very large stable with a room on the top of it; but ever since he had been in the service of Señor Quiroga nobody had used it.

"Nevertheless," quoth he, "I will take you there." He moved so slowly, and I was so tired and so was Maria.

Naturally, in the stable, which lay just behind the house, there was no morsel for the mules to eat; but this the man perceived. He promised that while we were talking to his master, if we really wished to talk to him, he would for his part try to borrow grass from someone in the street. On that side of the house there were no steps at all; the door gave straight on to the courtyard, and the door was open . . . We, with our small quantity of luggage, were not long in passing through the doorway, but we had to wait a little time until Faustino, the bewildered servant, brought a candle. There we three stood in the darkness of a strange abode, but Don Eugenio did not seem to be ill at ease.

"It is too probable," he said, "that I shall have to

spend the night in conversation with our host. That is my chief care."

"I have my faith in you," Maria said, "but are you sure he will not throw us out into the street?"

"My child," said Don Eugenio, "your faith in me is like the faith of most of us: we guard it very precious and never look at it . . . Before I came into this house I had my moments of misgiving. Now—well, I am like a lover who is on the point of seeing his beloved."

"Do you say that?" asked Maria in a tone of some surprise and sorrow.

"It is difficult for you to understand. I have been travelling so many hundred leagues and I have scarcely met a man who would have given a dilapidated cloak for one of these church manuscripts. Our host, the Noahcite, will know how to appreciate such treasures."

I was getting quite accustomed to the darkness of the room, when I heard footsteps coming down the stairs and we could see each other by Faustino's torch that was approaching. In a little time Faustino entered the bare room in which we stood, and just behind him was a very tall, thin, weary-looking man, the Noahcite.

"My servant tells me," said the Noahcite, "that you have come from Aragon. If I can be of service to you, pray command me; but I fear that both Faustino and myself have little skill for entertaining. We are solitary folk," he said, with some emotion.

Don Eugenio stepped forward, and his face shone as if not a single torch but many were illuminating it. "If it is true what I have heard of you," said he, "then you are toiling at a task that you will not accomplish. I acknowledge, Don Arcadio, that with

an aim so noble it does not so greatly matter if you do or do not reach it."

The tall gentleman bowed stiffly. "You have come to help me in my work?" he said.

"I will not hide it from you," said my master, "that I would not otherwise have travelled up from Veracruz. Correct me, sir, if I be wrong; but what I gather from the rumours is that you conceive of human knowledge as a pyramid, with all that we know now the base of it and with the knowledge of old Noah as the apex."

Don Arcadio bowed again. "Of course," he said. And then he turned round to Faustino, in whose hand the torch was trembling. "Do me the favour of preparing beds," quoth he.

"I ought to have explained," said Don Eugenio—while Faustino placed his torch on a gilt bracket which projected from the wall—"I ought to have explained that this is Juanito who has been entrusted to me by his father, one Pedro, a breeder of fighting-cocks. I undertook to supervise the education of the lad, who knows already how to read, and who in Colorado, where I found him, was reduced to reading newspapers and a poor book on dancing. This," he pointed to Maria, "is, as you perceive, a native also."

"I have a light hand for cooking the tamales," said Maria to the Noahcite. Her voice betrayed that she was ill at ease.

He called down the passage something to Faustino that I did not hear and then he said to Don Eugenio: "I like, señor, what you were saying of the pyramid."

"If you are near the top of it," said Don Eugenio; "if you are now concerned with Eastern manuscripts or other sources then I shall be of no use to you. But if the Latin writings occupy you still . . ."

"Yes, indeed," replied our host, "that is the case. I have not made much progress from the bottom of the pyramid. I see you understand what I am doing and, if I may say so, the sublimity of my purpose does not seem absurd to you, as to so many others, all of whom I mean to benefit."

"To-morrow," said my master, "we will set to work. And yet, perhaps . . ." He hesitated.

"Señor," said the Noahcite, "this journey from the coast will have fatigued you, and you certainly must not begin to work before to-morrow morning."

Don Eugenio smiled a little ruefully. "I was just wondering," he said, "it was a thought which sometimes comes into my mind that all our knowledge is in vain. It seems to me to be a circle which does not lead anywhere."

"Sir, it is a pyramid," said Don Arcadio.

My master waved his hand. "At all events," he said, "we shall not start before to-morrow. Will you let us go to where your servant is preparing beds?"

Our host took up the torch and led the way. My master pinched me as we walked along and whispered in my ear that it would not surprise him if we found Faustino sleeping in our bed. But when we had mounted the stone staircase—on the walls were faded tapestries—and when we arrived in a large room upstairs we saw Faustino very busily engaged. He had a pile of mattresses and blue sheets on the floor and, as he lifted them about, he muttered to himself.

"He is the best of servants," said the Noahcite in a low voice, as we four stood upon the threshold of the room. "If everyone in our unhappy country were as honest!"

"Pardon me," said Don Eugenio, "but I have never

thought that honesty is natural to man. You take a lofty view. As for any country being happy . . .”

“It is to accomplish that,” exclaimed the Noahcite, “that I have worked for all these years. And even if I die before the task is finished I shall have my followers.”

He spoke so loudly that Faustino heard him and turned round, and with a most pathetic look. “It if please your honour, I have not yet made the beds,” quoth he. “I have been thinking that I am a useless person and that you must pension me.”

“Nay, Faustino,” said the Noahcite, “do not lose heart.”

Maria said that she would help him.

“Ha!” The Noahcite observed her for the first time. “Well, well, well—we have a woman in the house, Faustino.”

And Faustino, who was standing with his bare foot on a blue sheet, nodded gravely, saying “May it please your honour.”

“So that you and I,” the Noahcite said to my master, “we can go downstairs and have a little conversation suitable for men of sense, such as ‘Why should A begin the alphabet?’ or ‘What is God?’” He took my master by the arm.

“Remain and help Maria and be quick,” my master said to me, a little breathlessly, as he was being pulled away.

And very soon we had the three beds ready, each one in a different corner. Faustino started telling us how he had been for many years the servant of his master, but Maria told me that if I was tired I could go to bed and sleep.

CHAPTER V

It was Maria's laugh that woke me up. The room was all in darkness and I heard the tender voice of Don Eugenio.

"And so it is," said he. "The poor man is entirely mad. I was afraid that this would be the case. And I am right."

"Oh," she was murmuring, "you are so great and wise and clever."

"That is nothing," said my master. "But I must say it is tragic that a man should get his head confused because of wanting with so great an ardour to make everybody happy."

"I am happy, I am happy," sighed Maria.

"My dear little one," said Don Eugenio.

Now I could see a little more distinctly, but I still could not see either of them, and I think they spoke no more.

When I woke up again, Maria had undone the shutters. It was a most brilliant morning. I sat up in bed and watched Maria, who was far more lovely, so I thought, than on the previous day. The sunlight danced all round her, and she seemed herself to dance to music which I could not hear. In the far corner of the room my master, Don Eugenio, still lay a-bed and slept. And so that I should not awaken him she came towards me with a finger on her lip. Oh, she was beautiful indeed.

She sat down at my side and put her arms around

me in a way to which I was quite unaccustomed ; for my mother, though she was so fond of me, had rarely treated me in such a fashion. And the other women of our village were true Indians, with the sole exception of the wanton woman Enriqueta, and, forsooth, that woman did not spend her kisses on the little boys.

When Maria kissed me in the radiance of that morning at Jalapa I did not feel shy, as I have heard that others in such circumstances would have felt ; but I remember very well how something seemed to break inside me.

Then my master Don Eugenio began to move. Maria took her place beside the open window, looking out of it. She laughed in merriment, as if the sunlight was in all her graceful body. I had never seen a woman like Maria.

“ *Hold!*,” quoth my master, “ have you taken it into consideration that we are inside a mad-house ? ”

“ Señor,” she replied demurely, “ it was you who brought us. Shall we try to find another house ? ”

“ The Devil ! As if that were easy ! I suppose we must endure it for a time,” he said.

“ Oh yes,” said she.

My master got up from the bed. Of course he had lain down with all his garments on except the coat, for in Jalapa it is cold at nights. “ And after all,” he said as he walked over to the window, “ after all, there is no danger in the madness of this Noalcite. I heard of two professors who were filled with hatred for each other : one of them, Tuphantius, composed a treatise very learned, very serious and very long, to prove that the inhabitants of ancient Greece had an effective hair-wash, for in certain of their tombs he had discovered something which he swore was hair-

wash ; then Magerius, his rival, wrote a still more learned and more serious and longer book to prove that the Assyrians possessed a hair-wash which was more effective, seeing that in all his work among their burial-places not a trace of hair-wash had been found by him or anybody else."

Maria was now looking out into the street and Don Eugenio did not ask if she had listened to him. After he had softly patted her upon the head and let his hand run half-way down her hanging hair, he also gazed out of the window and he talked, but I heard nothing till he suddenly turned round and told me that he would go out and make an exploration of this town.

The tapestries which hung upon the staircase walls were very old and difficult to understand, and Don Eugenio, after peering at them with his eyes screwed up, said that he could make nothing of them, and he looked so helpless. He had spoiled his eyes, said he.

Then I put my hand in his.

But he began to laugh quite cheerfully. "My son," he said, "it shows how much we stand in need of one another, you and I. The general and the scout—make way for us !—oh, yes, I'll have to train you for my scout."

I told him how my mother used to hate the notion of me being turned into a soldier.

"May she go to Paradise !" said Don Eugenio. "And when you have an opportunity please tell her that I once had her opinions with regard to soldiers. Oh, I tremble when I think of what Our Father thinks of men who hate another class of men. Such people are the fools of fools, and while I am sure as anyone can be that God is fond of certain fools, I am

not the less positive that there are fools whom He detests. And so your mother must not hate the soldiers or, indeed, the carpenters or the philosophers or those who sometimes have not kept the laws of man. But, on the other hand, if she will pity them . . .”

“The carpenters,” said I, “and the—the——” I was puzzled.

“The beginning and the end of it,” said Don Eugenio, “is that we should love each other, and we must have pity for all those we love. When you are a little older you will see the truth of that.”

We had arrived by this time in the large and gloomy hall, which had so little furniture, and we had noticed that Faustino was asleep upon the floor in front of what we guessed must be his master’s room. As we came close to him he did not waken, though, as I walked sideways, looking at him, I tripped up against my master’s feet and fell.

The iron-studded door was hard to move, but Don Eugenio and I were able, finally, to get it open and to leave the house. Poor old Faustino seemed to be enjoying pleasant dreams, to judge by the expression of his face, which now was in the sunlight. Yet we thought it safer—we knew nothing of this town—to slam the door, and whether he woke up we did not know.

The street was not so full of people as I had expected. It was nearly perpendicular, I saw, and nobody would walk there if he could avoid it, and the riders did not find it comfortable judging from the sour expression of a man we saw on mule-back, who was going with his jars of milk to the big houses. Out of one of them—a house which had a fountain in the patio—there actually came a man with whom

I was acquainted. Often I had seen him drive through Colorado on his way to Veracruz or to the mountains, and when he got off his carriage at my father's house he had been in the habit of allowing me to don his hat, so heavy with its silver decorations, and he used to promise that the day would come when he would show me the great world. And here he stood in front of me in all his glorious apparel—the purple plush jacket and the coloured shirt, the red sash and long leather leggings. I was sorry that Maria was not there to see him blinking at me.

“What has happened? What has happened?” he enquired.

“I am here,” said I, beaming at him.

“Our young friend,” said Don Eugenio, “consented to come with me, and I hope with all my heart that he will not regret it.”

Señor Blas, the driver, did not ask us why we had come up from Colorado or in whose house we were living. Possibly he would have asked us after he had finished blinking; but the one who spoke was Don Eugenio.

“Excuse me if I talk about your clothes,” he said, “they are so distinguished.”

“Sir, I thank you,” said the driver.

“Is it not the quiet thrush,” said Don Eugenio, “which is the moral bird and goes back to the last year's mate? And do not birds of a more brilliant hue exhibit morals of a looser kind?”

Señor Blas was solemn. “It may be exactly as you say,” quoth he. “And I am much obliged to you for telling me. But if your lordship wants to talk about my own attire, that is, indeed, a theme wherein I am instructed. I am here at the disposal of your Honour if you wish to talk of that.”

"Let us go up to the plaza yonder," said my master, "and sit underneath the trees."

"I go with you," said Señor Blas.

And as both of them were corpulent they did not speak while they were mounting to the plaza. Señor Blas laid his strong hand upon my head, and when I looked at him he nodded as if he were very pleased.

The plaza was the grandest place I ever had beheld, with a band-stand made of tin which glittered in the sun, and all around it were green benches and the palm-trees and the flowers. A few inhabitants sat negligently on the shaded benches, two or three were strolling on the plaza's yellow sand, and none of them was in a hurry. It was all majestic even as the buildings round about the plaza and the range of mountains which rose up out of the mist wherever you could see. My master settled down upon a seat with Señor Blas beside him, panting; as for me, I wandered over to where somebody was selling sweetmeats. Pink and brown they were—and I remember, as if it all happened yesterday, that I did not more long for them than for the mountains or the glittering band-stand or the silver-mounted hat of Señor Blas or the whole town of Jalapa. And the man knew very well, I saw, that I had got no money, for he did not interrupt his morning labours—he took every sweetmeat from its place and blew the dust off and then put it back again.

Ultimately I returned across the plaza to my friends. The driver was just taking from the inside of his hat some cigarettes; one he held out to my master and another one he placed in his own mouth. "And that," said he—he spoke with a great emphasis—"that is Don Maximiliano's Empire. It will have an end exactly like this cigarette."

"And like so many objects that we think important, such as our own world, the sun, the moon, the stars. I always," said my master, "think the nebula in the sword-handle of Orion is extremely worth our notice, for it has been examined and described by various observers since the day of its discovery, in 1656, by Huyghens, and it must have altered greatly both in form and physical appearance. What in all our universe is permanent? And if a thing so monstrous could exist, it could not enter our imagination."

"Now," said Señor Blas, "do not pretend I have not warned you."

Don Eugenio leaned back comfortably on the bench and smiled a little and "What would you have me do?" he asked.

"Oh well," said Señor Blas, "the safest thing is if you will do nothing. Then perhaps the enemies of Maximiliano will not kill you."

"How is this?" cried Don Eugenio. "Since I have landed in the country I have not had my attention called to any rivalry. To tell the truth, I know that Maximiliano is the Emperor, and he is sure to have opponents."

"May God protect you, sir," said Señor Blas.

He was rather agitated then, my master, and he threw his cigarette away into the sand. "Do you mean to say it is as serious as that?" he asked. "And everywhere, at Veracruz and in the villages through which I came, I fancied that the population was quite reconciled to having European soldiers in their midst—and, by the way, these soldiers seem to be so scanty that the people cannot feel oppressed."

"They will be scantier," said Señor Blas, "for it has been decided that the French troops are to be withdrawn—the last of them will go in 1867, that is next

year, in the spring—and then we Mexicans will have our fatherland again. *Que viva Mexico!*” These pious words he uttered rather loudly, and the idlers on the benches gazed at him; the sweetmeat-vendor, who was pouring out a drink for one of them, came over to us and enquired of Señor Blas if he could serve him.

The fat driver nodded. “Here we have a gentleman,” he said, “who is not much acquainted with our country.”

“Then the best thing is to give him of the snow of Orizaba, flavoured,” said the vendor, “with a little pineapple.” He mixed them in two glasses, and for me he took a sweet out of his bosom.

“Let us drink,” my master said, “to Mexico. And, after all, why should they not have their own fatherland? And what a fatherland! I come from Aragon of the green valleys and the river Ebro, which is one of the great rivers. I would not have come away from Aragon, the generous fields of Aragon, if I could have remained there as a peaceful farmer. But I am not sorry that I came to Mexico, which is more grandiose and just as fertile, if not more. The people in the villages are well-contented—how could they be otherwise?—and when their fatherland is given back completely to them, they—they will . . .”

“They will slay each other,” said Señor Blas.

“I beg your pardon,” said my master. “Oh, you are trying to make your country seem remarkable, even more so than it is. But have I not observed the people? They appear to me as if they erred a little on the side of sluggishness and you would have me think of them as fighting-cocks!”

The vendor made two other drinks, which they

received, and then he left us, saying that he would return.

"About the fighting-cocks," said Señor Blas, "I probably know less than Juanito here. Notwithstanding, I am dubious if they would fight unless they had the education. But I know my mules," he said, "for I have sixteen of them harnessed very often at the same time to the coach and I regret to tell you that they are like us, the Mexicans. They can be roused from slothfulness"—he took a handful of sharp stones out of his pocket—"these are what I hurl at them," he said, "and bitter words that sting their ears. The people of this country—Indians, Spaniards and the half-castes—would prefer to do nothing, and when they are roused to deeds those are the deeds of wickedness."

Don Eugenio took a draught of his snowed pineapple. "And look round there," he said, "the gorgeous vegetation and the mountains rising, range on range—it is so beautiful."

"I wager you an ounce of gold," said Señor Blas, "that you will wish you had not come to Mexico."

"But in this paradise a human being cannot surely be below all other human beings. Or I wonder if they feel discomfited by so much loveliness."

The driver shrugged his shoulders. "They are all the same," he said, "and those who come here they become as we are. There is a lieutenant-colonel of gendarmes," he said, "a Dutchman who incarcerates suspected persons in the prison of the capital and there he bastinadoes them. If I were you," said Señor Blas, "I would consort with nobody except your Don Arcadio in that house of the Corpus Christi Street from which I saw you come. He is a madman."

For a little while they did not speak and Don Eugenio was looking very troubled.

"Thus it is," said Señor Blas, "God be my witness. But if you have been unfortunate in many things you have been fortunate in finding me, since I will always help you to escape, if I am in the neighbourhood when there is grievous trouble."

"Oh, thank you," said my master, in a mournful voice. "And now may you fare well. I must return to Don Arcadio, my madman." He got up and took me by the hand.

But we had not proceeded more than ten steps from the plaza when there rushed upon us Señor Blas ; he rushed between us and exhorted Don Eugenio to be of better cheer. "You are a very learned man," he said, "and those who have a life so rich they have two lives or three to that of ordinary folk. Is that not so ?"

"Well, if they stand me up for execution," said my master, "I shall be well occupied, I am glad to think, in meditating on what you have told me."

"But they make you dig your grave," said Señor Blas. "But no ! That is enough of all such things. What were you telling me about my clothes ?"

We went on walking down the steep, deserted road to Don Arcadio's house.

"It was that I am like a little bird," said Señor Blas.

My master stopped and laid his hand upon the driver's arm. "Dear friend," quoth he, with a most pleasant smile, "you have been warning me so well of all the dangers that I run, and in exchange I do believe that it is in my power to warn you of some other perils."

Señor Blas was also smiling and he patted my dear

master on the back. "But, *hombre* ! I can take good care," he said, "for my own self. Be not perturbed on my behalf, I pray you."

"Very likely," said my master, "I am altogether wrong when I suggest that in our morals we resemble birds and that a person who is brilliantly clad is more inclined to waywardness."

"I said you are a learned man," cried Señor Blas, with much enthusiasm, "and that is the fact indeed."

My master sadly shook his head. "There may be just a little truth in it," quoth he, "since those who find themselves arrayed, be it by nature or by man's decree, in merry plumage have to bear the brunt of more temptation than we others—than we others, who have quite enough to bear, God knows."

But Señor Blas was puzzled. He pushed back his fine *sombrero* and he scratched his forehead. "I was friendly with a sparrow once," he said, "and saw him take a wife. They had six children. And when these had flown away he pecked his wife and she flew after them."

"I am afraid," said Don Eugenio, "that there was very little in my notion after all. And how presumptuous of me to take your clothes for an example !"

"No ! no !" Señor Blas exclaimed, "no ! no ! You are the learned one and you have given me a new idea, and, as you said, we both of us will help each other. I will help you with my coach when it is needful, and I know that you will help me when—who is that woman flying up the street ?"

It was Maria with her wondrous hair all out behind her. She was uttering strange sounds.

"Well, well," said my master.

Señor Blas was grunting out his disapproval. "She must be a very shameless woman," he observed.

Breathlessly she rushed towards us and, with a deep sigh of satisfaction, flung herself into the arms of Don Eugenio.

CHAPTER VI

NOTHING terrible had happened to Maria ; she was merely in a fright lest Don Eugenio should not return. And now that she discovered that her fears were baseless she became extremely playful. With a ringing laugh she flung round Don Eugenio's head her long, black hair ; as if it were the coil of rope which horsemen from their saddle hurl so accurately round the front legs or the hind legs of an untamed horse, the black hair of Maria had encircled Don Eugenio's head and he was helpless. There he stood and gasped and spluttered, and he did not see the face of Señor Blas, he did not hear the sound of his quick steps as he departed from us.

Naturally, I presumed my master would explode in wrath and would be furious against Maria, or, indeed, would send her packing. As she swayed from side to side in laughter—and she clapped her hands together and put them on the eyes of Don Eugenio, while he was gradually disentangling himself—I thought that she was something from another world, and that I—that I was no less a personage than the ferocious and superb lieutenant-colonel they had just been speaking of.

When I began to write these recollections I did not intend to say much of myself, for what am I compared with Don Arcadio, the Noahcite, and Don Eugenio and Faustino ? It is not that I am despicable ; my dear master, Don Eugenio, explained to me—perhaps

I have to thank him most of all for this—that we shall certainly find men and women and ourselves endurable if only we observe them, and that of all pleasures there is none so great as observation. What I placed before myself was to describe, since no one else will do so, the few months when these three men were living side by side. Of course, we others formed the background, and a background has to be included in the picture; but as demonstrating how much I have fallen short of my intention, and how very little alien matter I would wish to have, it is the truth that if my first plan had been carried out in its austerity such episodes would not have been admitted as, for instance, my awakening from boyhood into adolescence at Maria's hands there in the sunlight of the street. And I am sure that numerous, far less important episodes about myself and all those others will adhere to this my wandering record.

It was rather early in the day for people to be sitting on the balconies or to be watching from behind the iron bars or from the upper windows; otherwise they would have witnessed our most curious advance towards the house of Don Arcadio. We walked abreast, and each of us was occupied with his or her ideas: the girl was nearly dancing, I was nearly bursting, and my master, who perceived that, anyhow, Maria was in a condition to be left alone, smiled gravely and a little ruefully at his own meditations, of the days, I think, when he was younger. I thought it then, and Don Eugenio appeared to me just at that time to be a very, very aged man. I felt so sorry for him—he would lose Maria.

At the entrance of the Noahcite's abode there stood Faustino with a twitching mouth. He did not seem to know how to begin to speak to us, he rubbed his

forefinger athwart his chin and back again, and then he said to Don Eugenio that it would be good if we came with him, Don Eugenio and I, to see his master who, he added, had been searching for us a long time ago.

Faustino shuffled off in front of us and glanced across his shoulder more than once. And as Maria went up the stone staircase she threw us merry glances. I believe that she was singing to herself, but I could not catch any of the words. Faustino kept on jerking round his head, as if to make sure we were following. And in the darkest corner of the hall he tapped upon a door . . . He waited patiently and then he tapped again. My master muttered something, but Faustino made as if he did not hear him. Very gently, as a leaf that flutters to the ground, Faustino tapped again upon the faintly shining door ; and when my master pointed out that this was foolish if the Noahcite desired our presence he did not reply, and then at last the door was opened and the Noahcite, so tall and gaunt and dignified, was asking us to enter. Evidently he was suffering from some excitement.

Over Don Eugenio's head I saw long rows of books that reached up to the ceiling. Don Eugenio passed hurriedly into the room and, after stooping down to see what books and documents were piled on one of the four tables, he made first a step to this side then to that, and finally was very much like a bewildered bull that bounds into the ring.

"Welcome to my library," said Don Arcadio. "But let me ask how you have slept."

My master went on breathing heavily.

"Oh well," said Don Arcadio, "we must throw away these ceremonies. Will you stay? Speak! Are you going to be like my assistants who have

gone—I need not tell you why, but they have gone, and now the years are coming over me—there is no time to waste . . .”

“What books!” ejaculated Don Eugenio.

“Most of them are worthless,” said the Noahcite.

“I mean that for my purpose . . .”

Don Eugenio was at a book-shelf. All the room was lined with book-shelves, leaving only space for several windows and between two of the windows, on a space of empty wall, there hung what afterwards they told me was a map, a pale brown sheet with brown men and great birds and rivers painted on it.

“I have come to a conclusion,” said the Noahcite, “and I am in the hope that you, señor the ex-librarian, will agree with me. It is that in geology we have the science which reveals what is contained in human heads.”

“And I,” said Don Eugenio, “have been lamenting all these years the loss to Spain of that collection of the Marquis of Astorga, whose three thousand and four hundred books were sold to Scotland. Here in front of me is a collection of such grandeur as the Marquis in his dreams could not attain to!”

“Pardon me,” said Don Arcadio, “but for many years I was the slave of all these books. A score of them would summon me at once, and I endeavoured to reply to each demand. Of course I sometimes was enchanted by a certain book, so that all others were forgotten; afterwards I would incessantly be rushing hither, thither—it was blissful, always in the chase of knowledge. And if anyone has ever had a greater ecstasy and a more perfect happiness from literature of the imagination than I had from literature of knowledge—no, it is impossible.” His eyes were brilliant. “Then I recollected it was not the

happiness of me alone but of my fellows that I was pursuing. If I had continued in that mode of study I should never have been able to assemble in my own head all the knowledge of mankind and thus work backwards to the knowledge which lay, as it were an acorn, in the head of Noah. By supreme good fortune I discovered that my goal—and surely a great goal it is—was more accessible a thousand times if I no longer roamed down every path, but strode with such persistence as I have along the one path of geology. Most excellent señor, I have explained myself to you.” He bowed from his great height a little stiffly.

Don Eugenio was at one of the far book-shelves, with his back half-turned towards us. He was crooning over certain volumes as he passed his fingers over them. And yet he had been listening to the Noahcite, for he began at once to answer him. “I will remain with you and work with you,” said he, “so long as God permits. I have been told that the political conditions of this country . . .”

“That is nothing!” cried our host. “And you will stay and work with me! Now I am certain that my task will be accomplished. You shall have the room above the stable, for it is extremely quiet.”

“Many thanks,” said Don Eugenio, “and later on, no doubt, you will explain in a most lucid fashion why geology is to assist us to the goal you have in view. But for the moment I prefer to gaze at these inestimable treasures. *Hombre!* you have talked of happiness. And here you have a very good edition of the Jesuit Acosta’s ‘Natural and Moral History of the Indies, both East and West.’ How shall I enjoy to read again what the glorious Chrysostom and Theodoritus, a grave writer, and Theophilactus had to say about the sky which does extend or else does not

extend over all our world. I will give you four reals," he said, "for this book, the 'Ship of Fools'; the edges are scraped to clean them and the woodcuts are English copies of the Dutch."

"In fact it is not worth your attention," said the Noahcite.

"Except for the misprint in the colophon. There is Londod instead of London. But it is not everybody who has got my tastes." And, like a true bibliophile, he was quickly turning over the pages in order to see if any of the quire signatures were missing.

"The book is yours," laughed the Noahcite.

Don Eugenio nodded gratefully and slipped the volume into his pocket. "And, of course," he said, "you have Orosius—who can be surprised that King Alfred of England translated him?—this copy," Don Eugenio took it from the shelf, "has illustrations by the worthy Siegbertus Havercampus, and is published . . ."

"Do you want it?" asked the Noahcite.

"No! no!" He put it back. "And here is one of those Venetian school-books I have only heard of, with a border showing very accurately how the master flogs the boy, and here," his voice was quaking, "here is a most notable collection of forged charters from Turin . . . You speak of happiness!"

"Oh, they are very well, these books," said Don Arcadio, "but I do not regard them. All my time is given to geology, the wondrous science. Let me tell you," said our host, as he advanced to where my master stood, and speaking in the same tone very earnestly, so that I found it difficult to hear him—and Faustino at my side did not seem to make any effort to hear anything—"let me tell you," said the

Noahcite, "what are the special virtues of geology. It is the science which investigates the history of the earth, and all around us lie the rocks in which the records of this history are written. You will certainly admit that there is not a branch of natural knowledge which is equally wide open to the student who is willing to train up his faculties of observation and to discipline his mind by the patient correlation of facts and the fearless dissection of theories. We discover what exactly is contained inside the earth, and, since mankind is fashioned out of earth, we learn what is in man."

"Well, well," said Don Eugenio, smiling.

"Have you," asked the Noahcite, "by chance brought with you any book upon geology?"

"Alas," said Don Eugenio, "the only books and manuscripts that I could carry from the library at Zaragoza deal with sacred subjects. I have got some Papers of the Council of the General Inquisition of Spain, which have to do with the Republic of Andorra. The Republic was in striking peril then, in June of 1574, because the Huguenots were coming thither out of France. You may be interested in the smooth caligraphy of the Bishop on the right, whereas the notes made by King Philip on the left are in a large, wild, careless hand. I also have some very good Reports of the Inquisitors of Aragon, referring to the cases which had been disposed of at *autos da fé*, when the condemned were charged with moral crimes and with assisting at Mahometan or demoniac ceremonies. I have these in a most exquisite French binding of a light brown calf, probably from Lyons, with a handsome geometrical design, and, in the surrounding arabesques of black and silver, is the representation in gold of a death's head and of other religious

emblems, accompanied by a motto. I have likewise a good letter in Italian from the son of James the Second, King of England, to the Inquisitor-General with regard to the due payment of the pension of four thousand doubloons yearly, which was granted to himself and children. It is signed, in a large, lucid writing, 'Giacomo R.' And I have brought a manuscript of the Dialogo dos Montes, which the Rabbi Saul Levi Morteira composed in Amsterdam in 5406, that is the year 1705. It is the copy of a printed book, and on the title-page is a most decorative wreath of flowers and vegetables, and there is a sepia picture of Jehosophat, the Judge with sandalled feet and with a plume upon his turban. He is sitting underneath a canopy, beside the mountains, the Mount of Carmel, of Sinai, of Sion, and so forth, which are talking to each other. And I have a Latin pamphlet, the whole sentence passed upon a preacher in the diocese of Zaragoza who did not speak well of the Conception. Finally, I have a book which has a noble binding; it came to my Bishop from the library of Count von Hoym, the envoy of the Kingdoms of Saxony and Poland, at the Court of France from 1720 to 1729. It was executed for him by Antoine Michel Padeloup, whose ticket—'Relié par Padeloup le jeune, place Sorbonne à Paris'—is affixed to the title-page of the volume; there is a doublure of inlaid citron morocco with a beautiful dentelle border of fine tooling. The edges of the leaves are marbled under the gilding."

"We were talking of geology," said Don Arcadio, "and I am glad to tell you that I have a manuscript of Roger Bacon's, *de materia terrae*, which has hitherto been quite unknown, and which you kindly will transcribe and make a digest of, so that I may absorb it. How the manuscript came into my possession

I need not relate. You will be careful of it, I am sure, since I am no less fond of it than Roger Bacon was of Peter Peregrinus, of Maricourt in Picardy."

My master said he would devote himself with pleasure to this work, and how could he begin to learn geology, said he, from anyone more sound than Roger Bacon?

"It is excellent," said Don Arcadio, "to learn as Peter Peregrinus did. 'He is ashamed,' says Bacon, 'that anything should be known to laymen, old women, soldiers, ploughmen of which he is ignorant.' And while you are engaged, my friend, with this important manuscript the boy can be your servant, since Faustino is no longer young."

"The boy," said Don Eugenio, "has been entrusted to me by his father, who breeds fighting-cocks at Colorado, a most worthy man. I vowed I would conduct his Juanito some way on the road of learning. He can learn his Latin very well from Roger Bacon's treatise."

"As you wish," said Don Arcadio, "and in the meantime I must occupy myself with yonder map. It has to do not only with geology, but, I believe, with gold; and therefore by this map I will advance another step towards my philosophic goal and simultaneously I will give the people what they want; while I am on the path to reach, for them, eternal happiness, I will provide them with a happiness that passes, if, that is to say, I am correct in my surmise that certain marks upon the map, which was issued on the ninth of December of 1702 by command of the Count de la Moraleda, Knight of the Order of Saint James, Political Chief and Lieutenant-Captain-General of His Highness in the province of Jalapa, that these certain marks indicate gold."

"I am an adherent of the Church," said Don Eugenio, "and yet I doubt if things that pass away are not more suitable to man, if they are not more lovely in his eye than that which is eternal. We can think of this, however, on some other day. The work which I am now to do involves, I understand, no more than simple knowledge of the Latin language. What do you propose to do concerning Noah's tongue? Can it be possible that you have ascertained the speech he used?"

"I would have come to that," said Don Arcadio, "but there is no vast hurry, seeing that we have enough to keep us occupied—I do not know for how long. We may very well find somebody who knows the subject and is not a madman as, I fear, was Colonel Charles Vallancy. Have you come across his notion which connects the Irish language with the Punic, Kalmuck, and the language of the Algonkin Indians, with Egyptian, Persian, Hindustani, and the language, I presume, which Noah spoke? This gentleman, who died in 1812, had become 'the master as far as his leisure would permit' of Ancient Irish. He would have advised us to acquaint ourselves with Ancient Irish and if we excuse ourselves by saying he was mad, we must remember how disastrous it would be if all the so-called madmen of the world had been suppressed. Faustino will conduct you now, sir, to your room and I will work in this one—though, of course, we work together. It shall be as in that more convincing Irish legend of the twelfth century, in which the fairy asks the woman to go with him to the land where there is neither mine nor thine."

Faustino started shuffling off, so sure was he that a suggestion by his master would be instantly obeyed. And Don Eugenio, as he and I were walking up the

great stone staircase, told me that I must forget what he was saying about Don Arcadio being mad. "But the intelligence," said he, "belongs to everybody, more or less, who wanders through the world, and he will surely lose the way if he have not a heart to steer by. Let us hope that Don Arcadio . . ."

At this moment we were greeted by Maria, who was on the corridor above. "I have been carrying the clothes of Juanito to another room which is near ours," she said, "and I have waited a long time for you and I have spoken from the window to that Señor Blas, who says he will convey us back to Colorado if we wish to go there."

Don Eugenio patted her affectionately, and remarked that he was rather out of breath, not owing so much to the staircase as to all her catalogue of news. "I have had a rare experience to-day," quoth he, "and whither we are going—who can tell?"

"I would like to go to Colorado, if you like," she said demurely. "I have never driven in a coach."

"If it please you," said Faustino, "we have had two others who were in the room above the stable. One of them fled in the night and afterwards the second one became a special child of God—he lost possession of his ordinary senses and betook himself into the plaza and from there into the mountains, talking, always talking, as he went."

"I see that you believe in God," said Don Eugenio. "In these dark days of unbelief it is a pleasure to find anyone like you, who cherishes a simple and a lovely faith."

Faustino nodded. "My dear master told me that it would be better for me to believe," said he.

CHAPTER VII

DON EUGENIO and I did not stay very long alone that morning in the spacious study which had been assigned to us above the stable. It was nothing else but spacious when we got there, since it had no furniture at all, but only stains upon the wooden flooring which were due to Don Eugenio's predecessors or perhaps to the persistent curtain of fine rain, the chipi-chipi, which at certain seasons falls upon Jalapa and could come into this room by any of the three dilapidated windows. Now the sun was flowing through them very gaily, laughing through the holes, said Don Eugenio, as if it were a child. "I think," said Don Eugenio, "that if it were not for the people who are old in culture we should have no laughing, no frivolity, no childishness. And they are like that ancient sun."

Faustino had been carrying the manuscript of Bacon's work for us. He laid it down upon the floor and said, "I ask the pardon of the señor ex-librarian, but will he have some chairs?"

My master smiled. "I am so glad," quoth he, "that I have met you. And I hope that we shall stay a long time here with you and the august philosopher."

"Then I will carry in some chairs," observed Faustino. And he left the room.

My master looked about him for a time, and I could see that he was filled with comfortable thoughts. And as I watched him he became more serious, but

presently he smiled again, and in a child-like, wistful way. "If only it will last," he murmured. Then he saw that I was gazing at him, and he told me that he had been thinking of our future. This was going to be the room, he said, in which, if it pleased God to let him stay, he would be able honourably to earn his bread, by working for the Noahcite. He said he did not care a bit if this old manuscript of Roger Bacon's should turn out to be monotonous and dull, since it would be a way of showing me that dullness is extremely useful—"I once had a friend," he said, "a poet who dwelt in my town of Zaragoza. He was occupied in stamping upon round pieces of chocolate a picture of our Saint EUGRACIA. He held the chocolate with his left and stamped it with his right hand, while his thoughts were free to wander; and if his employment had not been so dull and so monotonous he would have had less freedom; and I think that freedom, not of body but of mind, is the most precious thing. At all events, my friend who stamped the face of Saint EUGRACIA upon numerous round discs of chocolate was in possession of such happiness that he made happy all his household, which was also very numerous and very poor. However, this is not the time for reminiscence," said my master, "though I do wish, Juanito, that you could have seen that friend of mine—his smile was like the song of birds. What we have to do is to apply ourselves to Roger Bacon's treatise. Incidentally, you will become acquainted with the Latin language. I foresee that—no! to work!" he cried. And thereupon I did my best to listen and he did his best to be like other teachers, till the moment when the door was opened, and the Noahcite stood at the threshold, with Faustino just behind him.

"I have come," said Don Arcadio, "to ask if you will dine with me. It does not matter very much if there is this delay in our great work."

"Oh, not at all," said Don Eugenio, as he rose laboriously to his feet; we had been obliged to sit upon the floor. "Oh, not at all," said he, "I have the hunger which Cervantes speaks of when he says in the *Novelas Ejemplares* that there are all sorts of things in the world, and perhaps hunger drives ingenious men to things which are not on the chart." My master rubbed his hands most cheerfully and made a step towards the door.

But Don Arcadio did not move. It never struck me more than at that instant how much he was like one of those statues which we raise in Mexico for generals or statesmen and which look as if they are the monuments of men who have not been alive.

"Perhaps," said Don Arcadio, "it would be well to start at the beginning and explain to you precisely what this admirable science of geology has taught us."

"Judging from those rays there of the sun," quoth Don Eugenio, "and not to mention other indications, I am pretty sure that it is time for dinner."

"Yes," said Don Arcadio, very earnestly, "it is the time for dinner. And I was myself upon the point of talking of the rays. As they pass through the air they do not heat it of a sudden or directly, but they heat the land and the sea, which absorb some of the rays and reflect others and so warm the air in contact with them. But, as you will comprehend, the land and sea do not absorb and reflect the heat rays in the same fashion or to the same extent; nor do the sun's rays fall equally or constantly on all portions of the earth's surface. So then, from various causes, one part of

the earth is always being warmed in a different way from other parts." He paused.

"My dear sir," said Don Eugenio, "I believe you said that you would tell me, with this famous science of yours, exactly what is in the earth, so that we may ascertain exactly what is in ourselves who live upon the earth. Well, it is my opinion that if you begin with the sun and his rays your programme will take you a considerable time."

"The sun as an abode of life," said Don Arcadio, "we may at once put out of the question."

"God be thanked!" said Don Eugenio. "And let us talk about the rest of it this afternoon." He threw an arm round the thin Noahcite, and off they went together.

I went after them, as did Faustino. On the way, so far as I could make it out, my master and the Noahcite were talking simultaneously, but yet they did not seem to be at all angry with each other. I believe the Noahcite was talking of that ancient map on which he had spent all the morning.

Thus we descended the stairs and passed across the sunny courtyard and had reached the long, dark passage of the house, when suddenly I heard the Noahcite stop and exclaim: "It is the truth that I am seeking, and no less! The truth about . . ."

"Do me the favour!" quoth Don Eugenio.

And they proceeded. Into the large hall they came, and as we followed them I was astonished when the silent one who walked with me, his hand on mine, began with that very hand to cross himself, and when I asked him what the reason was he said that always before Don Arcadio ate his dinner it was the habit of him, his servant, to do this. "Oh, that he may be saved!" murmured Faustino.

"But is anybody going to poison him?" I asked, because he was not one of those wicked priests from Spain nor a tax-gatherer nor anything like that.

"I am not a very good cook," said Faustino. "Before I came here I was other things and never a cook. And now I am here, as you see, and gradually he has sent away his other servants and so for several years I have been the cook."

Faustino did not speak rapidly; by the time he had told me all this we were nearly in the dining-room. That he should take me so into his confidence made me tremendously excited, and I had to ask him to go on, to tell me what he had been. I felt sure that it was something most mysterious.

"Oh well," said Faustino.

"Do you see Don Eugenio?" I whispered. "He was brought up to be a smuggler."

But even this did not arouse in him the spirit of emulation. "I was an orphan," said he.

"What did you do?" I entreated.

I must have spoken loudly, for the Noaheite, who was already in his place, with Don Eugenio beside him, turned his head round and gazed at me. His astonished look was so soon melted into one of amusement that when he asked me what I wanted to know I found myself courageous enough to answer him.

"What was he long ago?" I blurted out, as I pointed to Faustino. "He won't tell me the truth," I complained.

"Aha!" laughed Don Eugenio, "there is another one who is like your worship and seeks for the truth!"

"And why not, why not indeed?" exclaimed the Noaheite. "Sir," said he, "I fail to understand you." And he motioned me that I should sit down on the chair which was opposite my master.

"Pray do not imagine that I am a cynic," said my master. "I can hate excellently well, and one sort of person whom I do hate is the cynic. Let me make it clear why I was laughing: I believe it is ridiculous to go in search of truth. You may go searching, but, as that old writer Gongora would say, it is longer than a winter's night for a man who is ill-wed."

"Your illustration," said the Noahcite, "is to me, I must confess, not more attractive than your theory."

"Oh, I can give you another," said Don Eugenio. "We are all of us, it seems to me, in a great forest, and it is our business to hew a path on which others may walk pleasantly or, if that is beyond us, to walk ourselves along some path which is already made, and in either case to let our demeanour be a modest one. My sympathy is not with those wayfarers who continually dart away to this side, to that side, and shout that they have found the truth because of a strange brilliance on the bark of some tree or the pretty colours of a leaf which hitherto they never noticed or some unusual radiance of the sun which dazzles them. One and all of them persist in declaring that they have found the truth, and what they have done is to lengthen their path and sometimes to lose the path altogether and, what is worse, to induce other people to follow them." My master was leaning forward with his arms on the table, and his flushed face was quite near to that of the Noahcite.

"Sir," said our host, speaking very gravely, "it affords me a profound delight to see you in my house. You have a mind, if I may say so, worthy to go onward, onward in this grand adventure which engages me. Of course your attitude is totally wrong, but that we can change. It is so much easier to change a man's attitude than his stature. Sir," he said,

"I will give myself the pleasure of drinking to you." And he filled their two glasses.

Faustino had been standing patiently behind them with a dish of hot meat ; it was turkey, given us to celebrate this day.

While my master helped himself the Noahcite addressed me. He was in a very good humour, and he asked me whether I had not wanted to learn something about Faustino's youth. The only thing, he said, which he could think of—it was traditional in his family—was an occasion when Faustino had been left alone in the room with half-a-dozen oranges, and when his mother came back he had eaten them all. She was going to punish him, but he said that it was not his fault ; he was only a little boy and she ought not to have left him alone with all that fruit.

Faustino was looking proud of himself.

And the Noahcite was smiling. "I am sorry," he said, "that I can't tell you anything else about the youth of my good friend Faustino ; but why do you want to know ? Are you going to write a book about him ?"

By this time Faustino had placed a portion of turkey in front of me, and from behind the smoke of it I ventured to say, but very shyly, to the Noahcite that I would so like to know what Faustino had been. "My father," I explained, "is a breeder of fighting-cocks, and Faustino won't tell me what he was."

Don Arcadio made a sign to him that he was to take out the dish to Maria, and, after he was gone, said to me in the kindest way that for the future I should have my meals with Maria and Faustino. "I apprehend," said he, "that the conversation of myself and Don Eugenio, whatever it may fail to achieve, would assuredly do harm to your digestion.

Now, about Faustino—he used to occupy himself in selling lottery-tickets here in Jalapa, and I bought them from him and so did my father and my brother, who have both been dead for many years. Faustino used to oblige me, I can tell you, to buy his tickets, and we sometimes amuse ourselves nowadays by acting those old episodes over again. You see,” said the Noahcite, as he turned with an apologetic smile to Don Eugenio, “I have to take a little relaxation from my work.”

“You are perfectly right,” said Don Eugenio, “and is that why you have Faustino for your servant?”

“It was like this,” said Don Arcadio. “The man is of such honest stuff that he would not allow his own people, the poor Indians, to buy tickets. He knew that everyone is far more likely to lose than to win, and therefore he would only sell to the people who, in his opinion, had sufficient money. There was very seldom an attractive entertainment at Jalapa—apart from the secular festivities of carnival and the more religious orgies, perhaps a company of players would give us a half-hearted performance on their way to the capital—yet for me the best entertainment was to watch Faustino, usually in the plaza. But whenever he caught sight of me he tried to make me buy a ticket. His methods were altogether original, so that my defence was nearly always pierced, and—well, at last I thought it would cost me less if I took him from the plaza and gave him a place in my household, and now he is the only one. As I said, we still from time to time play our old skirmishes over again. Ah, yes,” he sighed, “I wish I had more leisure, I wish I had not wasted all those years when I was studying a thousand things, instead of dedicating every moment to this most august of sciences.”

"As soon as I saw Faustino," said my master, "I had a feeling for him. And what a cook!"

Don Arcadio had become entirely serious again. "With regard now to the composition of the earth," said he, "you will be much astonished when I tell you."

"Excuse me," said my master, "but if you know all about it why do you continue toiling at this science of yours and also inviting me to do so? Even if your knowledge is not absolutely perfect, I can assure you, my dear sir, on the authority of Fontanes that the desire for perfection is the worst disease that ever afflicted the human mind."

The Noahcite repressed his impatience and in a dignified tone informed my master that alas! he knew as yet very little, but even that little would astonish a thoughtful man. "I must ask you to forgive me," said he, "if in this matter of the composition of our earth I do not start at the beginning. But I promise you faithfully that I will begin at the most remote period with which I am acquainted."

"On the other hand," interrupted Don Eugenio, "would it not be saving a considerable amount of trouble, to both of us, if you simply say that the world was made by God? There it is, at any rate. And then you can discuss the water and the air and all that."

Don Arcadio drew himself up to his full height and, in an awe-inspiring voice, he said: "This God of yours who is reputed to have made the world, I pull him down from his seat. I am sorry," he added, "but I am compelled to do so."

At this moment Faustino returned, bearing a large tray on which was one of those fish they send up from

Veracruz and a highly-seasoned mess of chicken and a plate of our beautiful fruit and bottles of Hungarian wine, which Don Arcadio must have had from an official of the Emperor. I noticed that my master took a portion of the steaming fish and of the chicken with scarcely a look at them, and when Faustino had poured him out some of the wine and he had drunk it his lips were compressed for a little, but he was evidently not thinking of the silvery wine.

Don Arcadio would have nothing else to eat or drink. "By asserting that your God is responsible for the world, which is a grievous responsibility," said he, "you do not absolve yourself from the urgent need of knowing how He made it. And this is what I propose to investigate. But if in this act of making there should be some features that repel us, some terrible . . ."

"Oh, you need not imagine that I shall rise up in arms," said Don Eugenio. "I am a Christian, at least I was educated in a seminary, but it is not in my nature to be fanatical, and I can only hope, in all humility, that God will pardon me. Amen. What you said about pulling Him down from His seat has reminded me of that abominable fellow who considered himself to be of extreme grandeur on account of his extreme wealth. When he died he presented himself at the gate of heaven, but, before he could knock, Saint Peter opened it and besought him to enter. 'We have all heard about you,' said the Saint. 'Come in, come in at once.' Near the gate of the second heaven there stood an archangel with his luxuriant wings softly opening and shutting for delight. 'How good of you to come,' said he. 'We have been looking forward to this for many years.' And at the gates of the third and the fourth

and the fifth and the sixth heavens it was just the same, and at the portal of the seventh heaven who but the Almighty should come hurrying up, and 'Pray, my dear friend, do step in,' He begged. 'I—I fear I've been sitting on your seat.' "

The Noahcite laughed.

"And yet," said Don Eugenio reproachfully, "you will not believe that there is a God."

When the Noahcite had finished laughing, which he did with a series of jerks, he wiped a tear from his eye and again addressed my master, this time with an air of great reasonableness. "I do not regret," quoth he, "that before we set seriously to work we should permit ourselves to dally with this rather unimportant question as to whether God does or does not exist. It is more than unimportant, it is vexatious, seeing that each race of men have made themselves a God more or less in their own image—those who are worshipped by some of the savage tribes are certainly less powerful than is a civilized man. So there are Gods of all conditions—your God is not as my God—and how then are we to discuss as to whether God exists? My dear colleague," said he, leaning forward and laying his hand upon that of Don Eugenio, "will you not allow us to pass on?"

My master was very thoughtful, and then, with the most gentle smile breaking out upon his countenance, he said that in his faith there was only one God and that, although he had been taught that it is necessary to drag down the gods of savages, yet are these not the same as our God, inasmuch as they are the most lofty of aspirations? "And if this idea of God be nothing but a dream," said my master, "let us cling to it since it is beautiful."

As for me, when my dear master spoke these words,

which were outside my understanding, I felt as if I would have kissed his feet.

"It may well be," said the Noahcite, "that you have not had occasion to live with any savage race. We in this country possess, far away to the south, a people who are a thousand times more degraded than—than Faustino, for instance. Is that not so, Faustino?"

Faustino was behind the Noahcite, looking with admiration at the top of his head. And he answered, "Oh, assuredly," and his expression did not change.

"There are men who are called wise," said the Noahcite, "and who, because they have had to reproach these people for not tilling the soil and for not keeping cattle, and for being unacquainted with metals and for not even knowing how to make a fire and for not troubling to clothe themselves, except with a paste of clay which, when it dries, is turned into a sort of hard shell, and for having very elementary tools of stone or wood, these wise men see fit also to reproach them for having elementary gods. I must say, Don Eugenio, that I prefer your attitude . . . But at the same time I must say that all our Gods are different, and that yours of the seminary is not like mine, because he created the world. As you are not a fanatic you will not be angry with me, I am sure, if I say that I cannot help thinking that my God is higher than yours and more perfect, because he did not create anything. You will reject, even as I do, that proverb of an heroic but unphilosophic people which says: 'God is not sinless; he created the world.' But I reject it because the God they mean is not my God, for whom there is no time nor space, but Jehovah who rejoiced in the smell of slaughtered animals.

And, by the way, the name of Jehovah or Jahwe, which means 'He who causes to be,' was applied to the national deity before the arrival of Moses—the name of his mother is compounded with it—so that those early Jews knew better than to say that it was God who created the world, for you cannot create except in space and time. Moses also knew very well that the ten commandments were not inspired by God, so that he ascribed them to Jehovah; and perhaps it is due to this lesser authority being behind them that they have not been more rigidly kept.

“ You perceive that even if this Jehovah is not God he is nevertheless regarded to be in the enjoyment of considerable powers, and notably those powers of creation whose effect it was needful for me to observe. I was accustomed to picture him to myself as with a gigantic blow detaching from the parent nebula a brilliant globe of flame, which he sent whirling, whirling through centuries. And I liked to think of him being glad as he brooded over it and saw that in the cold fields of space the gases were condensing and that it was gradually becoming partly liquid and partly gas, and then, after millions of years, observing how the first crust of solid matter began to form on the liquid surface. All this and very much more I used to put down to the prowess of Jehovah. Is it then surprising that I revered him? And you will understand my grief when I discovered that he was a myth. To-day I have alluded to him in the old fashion, as I used to do, but now he has become for me no more than a personage of folk-lore. And I am convinced that if Moses had had at his disposal such collections of traditional beliefs and popular superstitions and tales and legends as we have, and if he had not been dealing with a semi-barbarous people he

would have announced that Jehovah did not live on the top of Mount Sinai, but in folk-lore. Moses was sagacious enough to see that one could not appeal to that people through their knowledge of the nature of things, because they did not possess such knowledge. If that eminent man were living now I am sure he would not claim that in his case there had been any more inspiration than in the cases of other good law-makers. He was prudent but uninspired, for the ten commandments contain only such fundamental rules of conduct as would suggest themselves to man at a very early stage, and the so-called Mosaic account of creation does not, despite the theologians, display any superhuman wisdom in the order in which the things are said to have been produced ; the writer is merely not stupid enough to create the herbivorous animal before the plants on which it feeds, or the fishes before the sea in which they swim. Moses was what you would call a sane person, one who is glad to have the sensation that the ground is firm under his feet.

“ Now, before I bid farewell to Jehovah, let me say that, of course, there is no merit in the fact that I am living at this hour when the generations of laborious and brilliant men have placed at my disposal their researches into folk-lore. But I would give a great deal if for a moment I could come face to face with Moses. I believe that he would be interested, that the eyes in his majestic head would twinkle and that he would listen gravely while I told him how, to my sorrow, Jehovah had become to me no more than a thick cloud. Were you not loth yourself, Don Eugenio, to lose Little Red Riding-Hood when they told you that she is the dawn, while the wolf which eats her, like the black cow which swallows Tom

Thumb, is a personification of the night? And as for Jehovah . . ."

"Let me make a confession," said my master. "It is this: they never told me what you have just laid down. And I should be grateful if you will allow me to retire and meditate." He rose from the table.

"In one word," said Don Arcadio, "the characters in folk-lore are the same as the characters in Aryan mythology."

My master was striding to the door and I got up to follow him. But just as I reached him he turned round and said to our host that he appreciated very much all that he had so kindly told him, and he understood that Jehovah was a thick cloud, something as to which he need no longer trouble.

Then the Noahcite rose also in his place and looked at Don Eugenio with some concern. One hand he rested on the back of his chair and the other hand he lifted up in warning.

"But even if we discard Jehovah there is no doubt," said he, "but that our earth was made. How was it made? Every people has its own cosmogony, that is to say, its own method of conceiving the origin and the formation of the world. But the traditions on this subject which have been handed down to us are, beyond all argument, mere myths. They relate an occurrence at which no human being was present, and with regard to which there is no documentary evidence whatever. And when did human beings first begin to make these myths? Tell me, do you think that the primeval savage ever pondered as to how the world originated? He was a child who holds that everything has always been as he now sees it. And the cosmogonies, which in effect are nature speaking

through human nature, did not start for a very long time."

"If you are going to describe to me all the cosmogonies," said my master, "then . . ." He grasped the handle of the door and turned it resolutely, but the door would not open.

Don Arcadio came a step or two nearer. "No," he said, "I do not intend to do any such thing. But as to nature speaking through the earliest human nature, I suppose the reproductive processes were those which had the first attraction for our distant, long-forgotten ancestors. I should suppose that their account of the world's origin would appear to us a gross and flamboyant indecency, not amusing, but pitiable."

My master threw all his weight against the door. A crash, a shriek . . . and we saw that on the other side of it was Maria. She must have been told by Faustino that we should all of us remain for a long time in the dining-room, because she had put herself as close as she possibly could to the door; and when Don Eugenio flung it open she and the chair capsized together; so she lay there with her garments everywhere but where they ought to be. Quickly she clutched her skirt, cast it back again to its proper position, and, while she still lay on the floor, she exclaimed, "May I be blessed! Did you ever see the like before?"

"No, in good faith," said my master, "except once at Madrid."

Then as we three climbed up the stairs together, Don Eugenio pinched her lovely cheek a little and informed her gaily that they both had suffered, she in one way, he in another, but that after their siesta they would be quite well again. And he said that

I, on this occasion, could lay me down in the same room, as he wished to talk to me.

"My legs do not hurt very much," said Maria, but she stopped to rub them.

Don Eugenio looked anxiously down towards the dining-room door, afraid lest the Noaheite should come up after us. And then he urged Maria to have courage and proceed. He put his arm round her waist. And as they moved on he told her, in the most fatherly way, that he would help her.

She began to laugh. "You talk," she said, "as if you were a doctor. But I have always been a poor Indian girl, and, by the Grace of God, we do not want doctors."

"My child," said he, "if I were still a Zaragoza, serving in the bishop's admirable library and making my researches for the 'life' of Saint Eugracia, it is probable that I could, if necessary, have assisted you more than a mere surgeon. Know that the oil of some of Saint Eugracia's lamps can heal a tumour in the neck, while that which burns in front of the Virgen del Pilar is capable of restoring a lost leg. And if the saint had declined to work one of these miracles for me, her faithful biographer, then for whom would she have performed them?"

Maria pressed herself more closely against him. "Oh, I am glad," quoth she, "that you are not at Zaragoza."

Don Eugenio said that he would postpone the conversation with me. Let me go into the plaza, said he, and perhaps find a boy to play with. And anyhow, I had done sufficient work for the first morning.

As they went away from me I heard Maria ask some question about the Bishop of Zaragoza, and

from her voice I think she was envious of the regard which my master still seemed to have for him.

And I saw that my master was looking at her and was making his ruddy face as stern as he could. "And there are people," said he, "who revere the venerable Palafox, Archbishop of Zaragoza, who advised the faithful never to look a woman in the face and never to speak to one of them without pressing into his bosom a cross garnished with iron points, so that temptation be opposed by pain."

I did not hear him say anything else.

CHAPTER VIII

EARLY on the next day Don Eugenio and I were in our room above the stable. It had meanwhile been provided with some furniture, but Don Eugenio was not much pleased to find that Roger Bacon's treatise was the only written thing of any sort which it contained. He said that probably the Noahcite, in whose collection were such fascinating books, desired him to give all his energies to this one volume, one, moreover, which related to a subject he knew naught about and wanted to still less. He laughed as he declared that in his numerous vicissitudes he never once had been associated with a personage like Don Arcadio. But he and I must not forget, said he, that if this most extraordinary man had not befriended us we should be in a sorry plight, for he had come to the conclusion—having talked with several of the natives overnight—that beautiful Jalapa was no refuge for the learned and, besides, the situation in the neighbourhood, what with the miscellaneous troops from Europe and the Mexicans who said they would be true to Maximilian and those others who were openly for Juarez and the many who were for themselves, the situation was unstable ; and if, during a disturbance, our protector should be slaughtered, we two, like the wicked people of a tale, would perish miserably. But for the time being, said my master, we stood in no imminent peril, for which we ought to thank the soldiers of all parties, and we were not obliged to beg

from nor to steal from the uncultured populace, for which we must be grateful to the Noahcite, even if he did insist on pouring geology into us.

"However, up to the present," said Don Eugenio, "he has dealt not so much with geology as with God the Creator, whose existence, by the way, he denies. But you observe, Juanito, that he could hardly stop talking about Him, and this is a reasonable proof that God exists. I have been told by men who occupy themselves with such affairs that, so far as we are concerned, there is nothing but our mind, that if our mind had not named and weighed the star Aldebaran, then Aldebaran would not exist. Of course, I do not argue that Jehovah must be weighed; we who meditate about Him are conscious of other qualities and glorious attributes. And is it not our triumph that the wretched fellow who denies Him cannot keep Him from his mind, which clearly shows that even for this Noahcite our God exists? . . . However, I did not intend that we should talk about this side of Don Arcadio."

"Oh yes," I said enthusiastically, "our God exists. He wrote those books in our church, because there is so much in them about Himself."

And Don Eugenio smiled.

It was impossible to be afraid of my dear master, and I asked him to his face why he had not said all these things to Don Arcadio in the dining-room, when Don Arcadio said, I was sure he said it, that there is no God.

"You are a good boy and a faithful one," said my master, looking rather sad. "If in my career I could have always answered quickly, then I think," said he, "that I should not have been so worsted in the struggle . . . That is it,"—now he was half talking to

himself and with a mournful smile—"the cannon has to answer to the cannon opposite . . . I bring up mine when all the enemy has ridden from the field."

I for my part wanted to put an end to his sadness. And, as I did not know what to say, I said suddenly, "Oh yes, our God exists, Don Eugenio."

He gazed at me. "My son," he said very seriously, "I can prove it in a multitude of ways, for instance, through the xylocopa, a genus of solitary bees, who die immediately after laying their eggs; at the moment when these are hatched there does not survive a single individual of the preceding generation, so that the young do not learn by example how to conduct themselves. Besides, they are in so backward a condition that examples would be of no use to them. They have as yet neither eyes nor feet; they are worm-shaped creatures whose existence for a whole year in a dark lodging is the most sedentary you can imagine. Nevertheless, as soon as they emerge, one sees them hastening actively to work, not for the satisfaction of their personal needs, but in order to make all those preparations which are wanted for the welfare of the generation which they will, in their turn, produce, and which they will never see . . . If their teacher is not God then we will call him God . . . And now," said Don Eugenio, "let us think about your own situation. It may be that you yourself would not examine it with care, since you are very young; and also you may be inclined to look upon me as a sort of god, whose wisdom and benevolence will help you always. Juanito, what we must consider is if the advantages you may derive from being here are greater than the perils. And I need not say that if you have to leave me I shall heartily regret it."

As for me, I think I merely stared at him.

"Dear child," said he, "you will be brave." He looked at me with such a brave light in his eyes that I could not help feeling as if I were his one comrade in some gallant exploit. "It is necessary that you should go back at dawn to-morrow," so he said, "to Colorado. Señor Blas will take you in his coach. I have arranged it. Also, if your parents are willing that you should return, then Blas will bring you."

"But—but——" I objected.

"But it has to be, my friend. Your father and your mother must settle it between them if you are to stay with me and learn the Latin language and some of the miscellaneous information I have gathered in the bishop's library and in the world. But your good parents will have to recognize that we are living in Jalapa at considerable risk. All the information I can get goes far to show that Señor Blas was right in warning me. The troops of Juarez may at any time rush down upon us . . . if there is fighting we may be compelled, you and I, to join either one side or the other, and they would show just as much regard for our private preferences as they do for those of the various Virgins whom they snatch up from the altars and carry bombastically at the head of one of their miserable armies. On the other hand, if there is no fighting, our position will be more perilous, because I understand that it is customary for them to have ceremonies of joy and brotherhood, which begin badly with enormous recitations by all the poets that can be found, and conclude extremely badly with a drunken salute of guns into any house they see, and this is one of the largest in the town . . . Perhaps you think that I exaggerate—I hope I do—but then, in your little village, you have never seen such episodes as I

am told occur from time to time in the towns of this country."

I had a sudden idea. "Señor," said I, "let us go to Colorado, you and I and Maria."

But he shook his head. "Maria will do what she likes, but I must remain," he said. "It is these books. Where shall I find again on this side of the sea those august volumes which I have already noticed? It is probable that he possesses books I should not find in any bishop's library of Spain, since he declares that formerly he was, like Albertus Magnus and Saint Thomas Aquinas, a candidate for universal knowledge. There will be books in velvet bindings, books in canvas, satin, linen, buckram. There may be a book or two whereof the famous libraries, the Barberina, the Bodleian, the Mazarine, the Riccardiana, and our beloved little library of the Escorial, are ignorant. We talked but yesterday about Mount Sinai—at the bottom of it in the Convent of Saint Catherine it was that Tischendorf, some twenty years ago, prevented them from burning a large basket full of parchment leaves—two baskets had already gone!—he found that they were parts of the Old Testament in Greek in an extremely old handwriting. And who knows whether there is not some marvel which is lying in oblivion here, since Don Arcadio neglects whatever is not on geology? When he is dead I have the deepest apprehensions for his books in such a country. To abandon them at present would be the most infamous and cowardly proceeding.

"This afternoon, when I have dined with Don Arcadio, I shall manage, in conversation with him, to walk by his side into that splendid room of books, and gradually, as he becomes absorbed with his map, or whatever else it may be, I shall escape his notice.

I shall glide away into a corner ! I shall revel in the great collection ! . . . And thus, day by day I shall hope to spend my time always less on this geology. We shall see. But there are some words in that book which, as you inform me, was written by God Himself : ‘ And the land had rest forty years ’ ; and I assure you that I hope it will be so in Don Arcadio’s discourse.

“ Oh,” said he, “ I can see what you are going to say ! What is the good of being killed in the midst of these treasures instead of living safely at Colorado or elsewhere ? Well, if I am killed it would give me pleasure to die in a fashion as noble as possible. Should I not be like one of the soldiers of Sertorius, Philopœmen, Brutus or Cæsar, a man richly and sumptuously arrayed and therefore, in the opinion of these sage commanders, more disposed to offer a great resistance than would a soldier who is poorly furnished ? Such was also the reason, we are told, why the Asiatic troops were wont to go campaigning with their wives, their concubines, their jewels, and whatever they most cherished. I remain among these books . . . Some day, Juanito, you may feel your body thrill in the delighted contemplation of a manuscript. Then you will know how exquisite and how divine a joy we mortal men are capable of bearing. You will grieve for those misguided ones who let their bodies thrill with passion. What will be the end of these ? There was a wise man, Juanito, who proclaimed that there is no more potent antidote to vicious ways than the adoration of beauty. And, I ask you, what beauty can there be on earth, what beauty of woman to compare with an illuminated book of hours on vellum ? Look for a moment at the specimen we have at Zaragoza, with the text in golden

letters and the pages garlanded and wreathed with an infinity of subjects, animals and men, comic and capricious and satirical and in most handsome colours. I will ask a decent citizen to tell me if his happiness will not be more enduring in the company of such a glory than with one of those complaisant girls . . . And now," said he, "we can do some work. I cannot undertake, like Roger Bacon, to teach a willing pupil Hebrew or Greek, no, not even Latin, in three days, but that is no reason why we should not work this morning."

So he put the manuscript on the table before us, and at the top of the first page he bade me read the words: "*Pars quinta compendii studii theologię.*" He drew his plump finger along the red line which was underneath these words and I looked at them very carefully. They were brown and all the rest of the page was brown, except some large letters which were red, and at the side of the page were things written here and there. I was looking all over the page, but my master told me to read the first words again, and then he told me what they signified and in that way I had soon learned five words of Latin . . . We worked until Faustino came and told my master that it was the hour for him and Don Arcadio to dine. He said that Don Arcadio was seated in the dining-room.

My master left me and—perhaps in order to escape as much as possible the bitterness of parting—showed himself no more until, at dawn of the next day, I was about to sally from the house. He stayed a long time in the dining-room with Don Arcadio, while in another room I let Maria talk to me. And she did not cease with her cheerful talking as Faustino came and went. But I could no more answer to her mood than if I had been built of stone.

When Don Eugenio and the Noahcite had gone into that large room of the map, Maria took me out with her into the streets. We wandered up and down, but I was very wretched, till . . . At twilight we returned to Don Arcadio's house and vaguely I was feeling glad that it was darker, since the darkness was like me, and as Maria saw that I was not so miserable she was very pleased, although she did not say so ; but she put her hand in mine.

We found that Don Eugenio and the Noahcite were still in that same room, and straightway she and I—as if a voice was ordering us—went, hand in hand, again into the street.

As we walked down the hill we came past people who had brought their rocking-chairs out to the pavement. There they sat and swayed. I should have liked to tell them who I was, and that at daybreak I was going on a journey by myself. But they continued swaying to and fro, they let the cigarette smoke curl out of their mouths, and none of them knew that their glowing cigarettes were nothing in comparison with the great fire which burned within me. How I pitied them !

At the bottom of the street there was a little bridge, and after that we came into the country road. It was so dark . . . the two rows of high trees were black . . . and you could scarcely see the road. We stopped to listen . . . there was nothing but the insects whirring over the dim fields . . . Maria's hand was hurting me . . . I would have kissed her, but I did not dare to look at her . . . we stumbled hand in hand across a field . . . it was not dark enough . . . we hurried on . . . my dear, dear Maria sighed . . . and at the end of another field the ground fell sharply . . . a few more steps and then

we stopped . . . there was a stream or a small river at the foot of the slope and we were in the long, thick grass . . .

On the way back she was vowing by the saints in Paradise that if I stayed at Colorado she would surely come there too. And always, always she would follow me. Her arm was round my neck, pressing me against her. And I tried to keep her hair away from my face.

CHAPTER IX

I DO not know how long into the night my master had remained with Don Arcadio, but they were waiting for me in the hall when I came down the staircase. There they sat together in long cloaks ; and indeed that gloomy hall was cold. It would have been quite dark but for the two fat candles they were holding.

"We have waited for you," said the Noahcite, in his own solemn fashion.

"Come and embrace me," said my master.

Even as I did so, he could not prevent himself from yawning. And the Noahcite was yawning too.

Don Eugenio handed me a letter, which I was to give my parents. It explained, he said, the reason why he was returning me. "And I have added," said my master, "that you have made progress with your Latin and that Don Arcadio and I appreciate your services. Is that not so ?" And as he turned towards the Noahcite he yawned again.

Our host was sitting with his eyes shut and his head had fallen forward. Now he jerked himself into an upright posture and he rubbed his eyebrow, which the candle must have singed.

"Oh, certainly !" he cried. "I appreciate you very much. What a beautiful night !" And then he sank again into a happy sleep.

My master got up carefully and glided to the door—he had no boots on—and with infinite precautions opened it. He stooped to whisper, with a shrewd

smile, in my ear that he had scarcely paid more heed to the Noahcite's harangues and arguments and absurdities in that room there than Faustino at this moment. And he pointed to Faustino sleeping in his old place at the door of Don Arcadio's room.

"The consequence has been," my master said, "that we have grown quite fond of one another. Now good-bye, dear child. May God protect you. And remember that there is a God. The words of that old reprobate have no more life than water in a ditch."

I kissed his hand impetuously and I hastened out, with my small bundle underneath one arm. The street was empty. I strode up towards the plaza where the coach would be. But I could not help looking back and there my master stood beside the door—his candle seeming very strange—while at her window stood Maria, making diverse signals that she wished me well. I waved my hand, I hurried on again.

The coach was being driven round the plaza by a boy who was not older than myself, and Señor Blas in his great cloak was striding up and down with someone else who had a cloak drawn up across his chin, and they were talking very earnestly. Some half-awakened passengers stood in a group beside their luggage, and the sweetmeat-seller asked them if they would have a refreshing drink or flavoured snow. But they were angry with him. And the boy who drove the coach got up and cracked his whip and shouted at the mules, who went on walking round the plaza. I could see the passengers consult with one another; yet they did not like to interrupt the talk of Señor Blas, because it evidently was most serious. And so they stamped their feet and breathed into their

hands and muttered. Then the sweetmeat-seller told me that the day was excellent, he gave me a long piece of chocolate and wished me a good journey. And at last the talk of Señor Blas was done, he got on to the coach and called me to sit next to him. When all the passengers had either got inside the coach or climbed on with their luggage to the top, Señor Blas addressed a word, as I had often seen him, to the mules, and slowly they began to pull. Yet I had to clutch the seat, for I had never travelled on a coach before, and I was almost shaken off.

The face of Señor Blas was very grim, but when he looked at me and saw how I was clinging to the seat he smiled.

“Aha! they shall not save themselves,” said he, “the tyrants!”

Then he ground his teeth, but went on smiling at me. But I had no time to ask him what he meant, because the houses which we passed were large and small and blue and pink and grey—I had not seen this portion of the town before—and flowers grew all over them. We came past a Franciscan convent which was very old; the monks inside were singing, so that Señor Blas began to sing a little. And a passenger, who thought that now he would not be severe, began to question him.

“I should be obliged, señor,” said the passenger, “if you could tell me why the coach did not leave earlier.”

As Señor Blas did not reply at once, another passenger exclaimed that it was scandalous for coaches to set out before the sun had made the air warm. “I have travelled in all parts,” said this one, “I have been to Puebla by the coach, and from Puebla I have been to Mexico itself, and as for

Cordoba I have on numberless occasions—Sir ! I tell you that I have spent many ounces of good gold on these coaches of yours, but as for leaving at barbaric times I never found one such as this, and if I die of it, then—I shall die.”

Señor Blas made the long whip curl splendidly and strike the neck of one of the front mules, just where the flies had made an open wound. By this he showed that he was meditating, and he sang so softly now that I could scarcely hear him.

“What a country we are in !” declared the first passenger.

“That is it !” cried the second. “I have not the honour, sir, of knowing you, but with your permission I agree with every word you say. What a country ! I have travelled in all parts of it. I have been to Puebla and other places, but everywhere it is the same. And there is no remedy.”

By this time we were out beyond the houses ; by the road were aloes and banana-trees and chirimoyas, not to mention other trees of which you cannot eat the fruit. Some of the passengers tried with their hands to catch the fruit, but now the mules were running faster. Señor Blas leaned forward, and as we came near a tree of lemons he cut off a branch so grandly with his whip that it fell right across the coach, and everybody clapped their hands or said bravo.

“They are at the disposal of the gentlemen,” said Señor Blas. “Come,” said he, “let us throw aside our cares and let us sing the Paloma. Who will sing with me ? One—two . . .”

Then he started, and I think we all were singing it. And when we reached the end we sang it all again. The passengers were so much comforted that one of them—he who had travelled everywhere—said it was

the most perfect song of all the world. And that other passenger said yes, it surely was ; and fortunate, said he, was the country which could produce a thing of that sort.

“ Let us sing it once again,” said Señor Blas.

“ What this gentleman was saying,” quoth the first passenger, “ is nothing more than truth. It is there on the surface, like the ducks. I say that in other countries you may dig out of the earth more gold than here in Mexico, but out of the gold come quarrels and murders. And out of our song the Paloma come no quarrels, no murder, no hatred.”

Señor Blas and all of us began again that exquisite and soothing melody. We passed a bare-legged, grizzled vagabond, who took off his sombrero and gazed up at us with the expression of a dog unjustly hit. We clattered on and did not stop our singing, but we threw into his hat or on the road some pieces of small money and some chocolate and some lemons. I believe we sang for more than a whole league and certainly long after sunrise. Señor Blas shook off his cloak, so did the passengers, and they were getting friendlier and friendlier to one another and to Señor Blas. They held out cigarettes to him, and when he took them they were very glad ; one passenger had some cigars rolled up inside a vegetable leaf, and saying only “ Do me the favour,” he put three or four of them between myself and Señor Blas. I seized them as they were about to fall ; we had to stop the coach in order that they might be safely stowed in Señor Blas’s hat. So there was always something going on, and I had very little leisure for the other things : the women, now and then, with children on their backs, the loaded strings of mules, the white and blue and scarlet flowers hanging from

the trees, but so high that I could not reach them, and from time to time a wooden cross with some initials on it, and then myrtle trees and palms and the green liquidambar, and, far off, between them one could see the mountains that were in a haze already. I am sure I would not have observed one-half of these things even if it had not been for Señor Blas, who likewise told me of the wooden crosses which were often over friends of his or enemies.

If this had not been my first journey in a coach, perhaps I would have spent the day in thinking of my master and Maria, and my parents and the others I would see, and Don Arcadio and Faustino. But when I was ready to remember them I was a little weary, from the jolting, and the dust was in my eyes, and it was very warm. So I thought of them rather languidly, and as I dropped to sleep I seemed to hear my master speaking to me very gently, saying that he promised I should soon go back to him. And then I seemed to have Maria walking with me hand in hand—her words were like the white flowers falling over me—and then I knew she was far off, that I was rolling further, further—and it was as if a knife was in me.

Señor Blas with his left hand pulled his cloak up to my shoulders and said that we should be in a fine large village in an hour. But we were not. For as we bumped along a stretch of road that was no rockier than the rest and which had holes not any larger, suddenly one of the wheels collapsed and Señor Blas made the mules stop. He and all of us got down, the wheel was broken utterly, and after looking at it for a little time he said this was no accident, that someone in Jalapa had arranged the whole affair, and very jovially he said that if there was a gentleman to whom he owed some money he would pay him now.

The passengers knew very well what he was thinking of; they hurried hither, thither, cursing, shouting, giving orders, while their pistols glittered in the sunlight. Señor Blas looked at the wheel and shook his head, but no one else would look at it: one passenger was crawling underneath his luggage in the coach, another was behind a tree, two others simply ran a few steps up the road, then back again, not knowing what to do. Señor Blas said that it would be possible to mend the wheel if they would help him, but they all said that it was no use, and why should they exert themselves in vain? Then Señor Blas said that the mules might have their dinner, and he gave it them. He moved about as if he were at peace with all the world, and then a passenger called out to him, and in a bitter voice, that this was a good opportunity to sing his dear Paloma.

“What a country!” said the passenger who was inside the coach. “Alas, alas! what will happen to us? And it is our own fault—we should have examined all the wheels.”

One of the two passengers who had been rushing up and down the road exclaimed that this was not the truth, because it was the Government’s own fault. The Government, said he, was weak. If it were strong the bandits would be frightened. It is clear enough, said he.

But that one who was in the coach said this was something he could talk about, and very well. He was excited. As it happened, this was just the very subject, so he said, on which he had been meditating many years, and he would be surprised if he knew less about it than did other people. Should a country have, or should it not have, a strong Government? “That is what we are discussing, is it not, señor?”

said he. "And I will tell you that I am a barrister, acquainted with the laws of Rome and other ancient countries, with the Spanish laws and with the French. And I am altogether at your service." He was smiling in a calm, triumphant way; and if he was uncomfortable in the coach he did not show it.

"Señor," said the other one as he stood smiling also and caressing his black beard, "I have not meditated about all those things, for I am only a commercial man of Veracruz; but I permit myself to say that in this land the laws of Rome and France and all the others flourish just as much as any of the laws of Mexico. That is the kind of country that one has to live in!"

The other passengers and Señor Blas and I collected round this gentleman; that one who had been walking with him up and down said that assuredly he had the right on his side and he patted him upon the back.

The barrister asked in a loud voice for some patience. "Do I understand," said he to the commercial man, "that what you want is a strong Government? I ask you nothing else."

They all replied in chorus that of course it should be strong. And Señor Blas held up his forefinger and said the Government should be not only strong but good. And we all murmured our applause.

The barrister did not seem disconcerted. Holding himself at the window with his left hand, he held up the other with the open palm towards us, and a look of sympathy came over him. "It will be very easy for me," he began, "to show you that it is the object of the greatest men to make the Government more weak, less capable of interfering with our liberty. There are, relatively speaking, few things which we should allow

the Government to do. What can be more divine than liberty? And, gentlemen, remember that by Article No. 3 of our Constitution of 1857 it is promulgated to the whole world of the two Americas and Europe that as soon as any slave shall set his foot upon our soil he is a free man. What could be more lofty, what could be a better proof that we, beyond all other countries, worship freedom? And you, gentlemen, would lightly throw away our grandeur, you would have us brought down to the level of those other kingdoms, empires and republics with their strong, their interfering Governments, their Governments which have no article like that one, for the simple reason that they loathe the very words 'a free man.' Is that not the case?"

He halted for no answer, but continued headlong: "Plato said that there are States which have true artists for their rulers, ruling in a spirit of unselfishness, and States that wolfish rulers govern selfishly. Wolfish men, unselfish men—that is how they rule us if they have the power. And clearly men are much more often of the first kind—they are as bad as God made them, said Sancho Panza, and some of them a good deal worse—so that generally men should not have much power over other men. Indeed, a land with a weak Government is very blessed."

"And I suppose," said Señor Blas, "that one with two or three weak Governments, all at the same time, is more blessed?"

"When we come to Rome," said the barrister, and in a louder voice, "what do we find? The people of a single town were governing the world. Will anybody, here or elsewhere, contradict me when I say that this was a superb material success and also of the spirit, for a man was proud to boast, 'Civis Romanus sum'?"

No success indeed could have been greater, and the Government was weak. Yes, it was very weak, because the people wielded it and not a single man or any clique. That was the time of glory . . . Later on the Government was strengthened, for the generals placed themselves above the people and one general above his fellows. So the Government was strong, supported by the army ; and as a result all freedom everywhere was crushed beneath the Roman military despotism."

It was in the middle of the barrister's oration that a splendid cavalier had joined us. He did not dismount, but guided his young foaming stallion near enough for him to hear the speech ; and at the end of it this gentleman removed his hat and bowed to all the others. Señor Blas and he had evidently met before ; but no one else was smiling, and the cavalier composed himself as he looked round and bowed again, and said he trusted that they would not let him interrupt them.

"By no means," said the barrister. "And I believe, sir, you are interested in this argument which turns upon the question as to whether it is preferable for a Government to be a weak thing or a strong one."

The commercial man broke in. "A traveller," said he, "of such distinction must assuredly be with us. It is only a strong Government which can protect a citizen who is so richly garbed ; and I am sure you often must have wished to be in countries where the people are protected. Why, your silver spurs, to mention nothing else, must cause you terrible anxiety."

The cavalier replied in a most graceful way to both. He said that he entreated them to talk as if he were not there at all. In these high matters he was very ignorant, as yet.

"Oh well," said Señor Blas, "I know some naughty brigands who believe they flourish here because our Government is weak. Is that not so, my friend? And what a ludicrous mistake!"

"Never," said the cavalier most courteously, "no, never shall I contradict you. But I should be really glad to learn, most estimable Señor Blas, why it is such a ludicrous mistake."

"Then I will tell you, Don Fernando."

There was something in their voices which caused everybody else to listen quite attentively—the barrister, who now was leaning far out of the window, and the bearded man, the other couple and myself.

"*Bueno*, in this country," said Señor Blas, "the people are of such a sort that even if the Government were strong the brigands would accomplish their desires. It is not possible for any Government to get the better of them, with a people such as we are. Always, always if a brigand or a soldier lays his hand on something or on somebody there is no shadow of resistance. In this way we Mexicans are made. That a man should suffer is a good thing, but that he should be prepared to suffer more is bad."

"What a country!" said the barrister.

"It will not cease from effervescing or it will not effervesce at all and both are bad, in my view," said the man of commerce.

Señor Blas ignored the interruptions and proceeded: "I will give you an example. In a farmstead were a certain company of brigands who first overpowered the men and afterwards went seeking for the women. Two of these—a handsome girl and her decrepit mother—had been hiding in the same room, but in different cupboards. Well, they found the girl and dragged her out and all that. Then they found the

mother and were dragging her out also when the girl entreated them, with tears and piteous screaming, to be merciful. She flung herself before the feet of one of them and begged him that her mother should be spared. But the mother was annoyed and curtly bade her daughter to be quiet. 'Say no more, you foolish one,' quoth she. 'It is the fortune of war.' "

"And, gentlemen," said the cavalier, after they had stopped laughing, "there is not another tale more true than that one. It was at a farm near La Calera in that pleasant region. I remember it as though it had all happened to us yesterday. Gentlemen," said he, with a vibration in his voice, "I beg that you will not be rash."

Everyone, save Señor Blas, was pointing with his pistol more or less in the direction of the cavalier. And he seemed to be covering them all with his own weapon.

"You were arguing," said he, "about the Government, if it is better weak or strong. And Señor Blas, my old friend, is of the opinion that a nation's character is more important than the Government. I am extremely interested in such thoughts, for I shall some day, when it is more opportune, renounce this undomestic life and I shall let myself become a deputy—that is what I have ever placed before myself. But as for Señor Blas, I think he has good reason on his side. And I think there is something else which is of more importance than a Government. There is our holiest religion."

As he said these words he crossed himself, with that same hand as held the pistol. Other hands among the group of men were hesitating or spasmodically imitating his, as if their owners had not got control of them.

“It is religion,” Don Fernando said, “which causes me to come here by myself and not with any of my comrades. We were on the outskirts of Jalapa when we met a priest who was transporting the viaticum. We saw him and his acolyte, who swung the incense ; naturally we dismounted, we knelt down upon the road and prayed devoutly for the dying man to whom the priest was going. We remained thus for a time in ardent prayer that the sins of this man should be all forgiven. There was yet, when we arose, a faint smell of that incense in the air. With one accord we said that this was not the day for any enterprise such as we had intended. And, indeed, if we had persevered with it I doubt if God would ever have protected us again. So I have only come in order to relate what has occurred and so that you can put away all your anxiety.”

“*Hombre !* that is kind of you,” said Señor Blas.

“Nay, more, I am at the disposal of your worships,” said the cavalier. “How can I serve you ?”

He was very much in earnest, one could see, but nobody made a suggestion. Some were frowning, some were gazing at him in a stupid way. At last he said that he would ride into the nearest place and bring us back a wheel. He would go instantly, and it would not be like that person of the proverb who went out for wool and came back shorn.

The cavalier departed, and we stopped beside the coach for several hours. At first they talked with vehemence about the cavalier and Mexico and liberty and other things. Then, as the sun beat down upon the road, they got inside the coach and started playing cards, and most of them became exasperated on account of their bad cards and of the heat and of the cavalier's delay and of the big flies which the

mules attracted. Clearly Don Fernando had not found a wheel in the first village or the second. And although the passengers told Señor Blas that he would not return at all, of course he came ; but in the meantime I had ample opportunity for thinking of the new, strange life up at Jalapa, out of which I had been torn. And in my hours of loneliness beside that road I grew more desperate and yet more desperate in the resolve that I would not remain at Colorado. You might just as well command a boy to turn away from the procession of a circus when he has beheld the marvellous beginning of it. Later on I grew less violent, because I told myself that if my parents tried to keep me I would run away or take no food, or by some other method show them that I was not to be hindered.

When the cavalier came back and had assisted us to put the wheel on, he saluted us and rode away towards Jalapa. As he went he sang, but rather mournfully, the first few bars of the Paloma.

We, however, on the coach, refrained from singing, for the mules were made by Señor Blas to go so rapidly that we were in extreme discomfort and in danger. But although we went at such a speed it was entirely dark when we arrived at Colorado. They were in so great a hurry that they said good-bye to me before we got there, and as soon as I was on the ground they rolled away. That was the last I saw of any of those passengers.

There in the darkness of my village, as I struck out for my parents' house, it seemed to me the dust through which I had to walk was most barbaric after those good cobbles of Jalapa. My poor parents, how I pitied them ! And in the large room of the house there was my mother and with her Don Bartolmé Robledo, the old captain. I had flung myself against

the door impetuously ; then I stopped—they were all blinking at me : my poor mother, the old captain, and the candle.

But how different had been the flame upon my master's candle, as he stood that morning in the cloak and watched me leave him !

CHAPTER X

As I sank down at my mother's side and was embracing her, she murmured incoherent words of love. She pressed me very tightly to her. Then, while she was crooning still, she touched me on the head and on the shoulder and the arms, wherever she could reach, because she was afraid that I was injured.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Don Bartolmé.

I told her that I was not hurt at all.

"No, no!" she said. "I am your mother and you cannot hide it from me. This is what I always knew would happen and I always told your father. I shall tell him when he comes in from the shop, where he is playing cards as usual with Gonzalez and the others. It was very wrong of me to let you go with that man who was fat and—and—tell me what they did to you."

In vain I tried to reassure her. But the Captain presently had a most useful thought, when he said that it would be well to give me food. He helped my mother to prepare the meal, and then he sat down with me, for he himself—my father being absent—had not had his supper. I was so tired that I nearly fell asleep while I was eating, and my mother rambled on:

"To come back at this hour of the night, as if he were a thief! And he the son of Pedro, who is everywhere respected for the valiance of his fighting-cocks. Why should our son return in this way?"

They have not been good to him, or he has seen that all the world is nothing but a snare, as the priest said. Don Bartolmé, when I told the priest that Juanito in Jalapa would be educated, he replied that it was good and when I said he would obtain a high place with this education the old priest said that all greatness is a snare, as was perceived by warriors and noblemen who had themselves enrolled, the priest said, in the ranks of Capuchins. Well then, said I, what is the use of education? . . . Look at me, my son," she said, "it is so plain that you are ill."

"What I know," said Don Bartolmé, "is this, that if they had provided him with such delicious beans he would have kept his health intact." The aged Captain was enjoying his brown beans immensely.

"After you had gone away with that old man from Spain," my mother said, "I thought that you would give yourself to soldiery, since you had always been encouraged by your father in those soldier-games. And then it would no longer be a game, but something serious with an evil end. Your father would not listen to me, and I told a man of reason who was travelling through Colorado, but he said it was like some of the celebrated saints to be a soldier, and that if one lived in a large town instead of Colorado one would mingle with high officers and know them well. Of what advantage is it that my Juanito should know all about the virtues and the vices of some General, I ask?"

The beans and other food had put fresh life into the aged Captain. He banged with his fist upon the table, and declared that there is no vice in a General of Mexico.

"The rogue you are!" my mother cried. "Or did you never hear of that one who was writing to his daughter and said: 'I hope you are well, I wade in

blood.' . . . But let me tell you that my Juanito was not made to be a man of that sort. And he knows it too," she added in victorious tones, "and that is why he has escaped. O my beloved one, they shall not catch you, and no other man from Spain or anywhere shall take you from your mother. Now go to your bed." She kissed me on the brow more fervently than she had ever done.

Then footsteps and some other noises rang outside the house, and in a very little time my father, and Gonzalez and his woman Enriqueta were encircling me. Their mood was jovial, and my father caught me in his arms. He laughed and talked and pinched me, and was not at all depressed when he observed the gloomy silence of my mother. It was splendid to be with him after all her anxious speculation.

"Father Pedro," said my mother in a warning voice, "you know not why he has returned."

And Enriqueta told Gonzalez to go over to the shop and bring a bottle of his wine for them to drink my health.

"You are a heartless person," said my mother. "He is very sick. I wish that he were looking still as he did half an hour ago before his supper. Then you would perhaps close fast your mouth."

My father asked me if I had enjoyed my supper, and when I said we had eaten everything he was delighted, put his hand upon my stomach, and said anyhow there was one part of me which was not ailing.

"Leave him alone!" cried my mother. "I will not have you touch him there."

"Then," said my father, "I will carry him to bed." He took me up in his strong arms. And at the door he turned and with his joyous laugh exclaimed: "The Holy Roman belly!" As he carried me along,

I heard them laughing down below. I knew that my good mother would try vainly not to laugh; there never yet had been in Colorado any woman or a man so stubborn as to hear those words without hilarity. Some traveller from Spain had left them years ago; for he had told us of a Holy Roman Emperor, I believe that it was Charles the Fifth, who was a very mighty man. One day, when he was ill in bed, the doctor pressed him through the bed-clothes, here and there, to find the seat of trouble; and when he began to touch the sore place, "*Holà!*" cried the Emperor, "remove your hand from off the Holy Roman belly." That is why we always laughed at Colorado when we talked of bellies.

As my father laid me down he said that he knew all about the Noahcite, for he had made enquiries from a customer who told him that the Noahcite was mad, and very rich and amiable. The customer revealed so much about the life of Don Arcadio that my father had resolved, as soon as possible, to pay us all a visit at Jalapa. Had I run away, he asked, or had I only come to have a holiday?

"Yes, holiday," said I, "and Señor Blas will take me back."

My father kissed me and I fell at once into a dreamless sleep. But early in the morning when I gradually woke the first sensation which I had was one of dread that I should have to stay between these walls. One episode and then another from the previous night went flying through my head—and glimpses of Jalapa flew among them. How I shuddered at the difference! For I belonged to Don Eugenio and the Noahcite. I shuddered as I thought about my parents, and yet and yet I loved my father, and my mother also. Every word which they had said the night before came

back to me, and that one which I clung to most was "holiday," my father's word. As I grew more composed I set myself to plot and plan how I could use this word of his. And in the end I had decided that I would read out to them my master's letter—since they could not read I might say anything, and it should be about a little holiday.

When I was with my parents afterwards it happened all as I had hoped. My father looked at me and told my mother that she was a silly woman if she still persisted that I was unwell. And she admitted that I had improved since my arrival. Oh, I was so glad!

And so were they when I informed them that I had begun to learn the Latin language. With a beaming face my father pointed out how glorious a future was prepared for me. He had been thinking, so he said, about the various positions I might occupy when I could show the rulers my capacity. He recognized, he said, that Latin was not everything, and that a fellow who was very skilful in it might yet be debarred by the authorities, deservedly debarred, from reaching posts of honour and of profit. Other qualities were doubtless necessary, also, for advancement—how could he say what they were since he was nothing but a simple breeder of the fighting-cocks? But if the people once perceived that I had learned this famous language they would know that I could learn the other things.

"And anyhow," my mother said, "he will be able then to comprehend all that the priest says."

"*Pues!*" said my father in disdain, "that will not advance him very far."

"It will advance him surely into heaven," said my mother.

But my father snorted. "Touching Don Arcadio,

the Noahcite," said he, "there is a customer of mine who was here from Jalapa yesterday. This doctor, for he is a doctor, used to know him very well, but now they are no longer friends. Of course, the first thing that I asked was on the subject of your Don Arcadio, and very willingly the doctor told me, though I could observe that he was longing to consult with me about his fighting-cocks, and I myself was anxious he should buy a very good one, called El Chino, which will fight in such a way that ladies will throw flowers from their boxes, yes, and diamonds."

I had to interrupt. "O little father," I complained, "do you think I could forget El Chino? I have not forgotten one, not one of them."

"Son of my soul," said he, "but I was going to say that both the doctor and myself were eager to converse about our business, yet we spoke of Don Arcadio. It seems that he belonged to one of the most rich and reputable families; his father was a gallant of his own time, and in later years a brother of your gentleman was in the forefront of Jalapa's aristocracy, a comrade of the doctor's at the cock-pit. Don Arcadio, on the other hand, was always odd—a man who had his own ideas on everything. The strangest part of it was that he lived in the great house of Corpus Christi Street and moved about Jalapa, when he really should have gone to dwell in some remote farm of his family or else have made himself a hermitage among the mountains. Everybody would have been more comfortable. He would sometimes loiter in the plaza, just like any Christian, but if you addressed him, talking of the latest news, he would not speak of it like other men, and therefore it was natural that they avoided him. He did not wish to be avoided, but it came about and more and more.

To see him wandering up and down was very sad, and, since he would not lead the pleasant life, they wanted to persuade him to fill any of the posts such as are suitable to gentlemen of his position. He refused. He would not, for example, be a magistrate, because he said that dealing justice out to men was an iniquity, for justice was a cold, repulsive thing. He would not even change his attitude when they reminded him that justice is administered by God and therefore it is something sacred."

"And," said my mother, with determination, "it will not be cold for him. Amen. He will be thrust into the fiery torment."

"Gaudalupe," said my father—he was quite indignant—"you know very well that if he were a man of that sort I would not permit our Juanito to be with him."

But my mother had some more to say. "How can I tell? You do with Juanito what you like and I am nothing, I am pitiful, I am as a wounded cock who asks for cacao. So it is, and I—I," she was nearly breaking down, "what am I? For a long time you have looked through to the other side of me and you have asked for nothing, not for my advice and not for my attention, not for love."

"You are the pearl of women," said my father, "but you are a woman and in great confusion, like the negroes' banquet. I will talk of all those things another time. But now it is of Don Arcadio who would not be a magistrate. They told him, as I said, that justice is administered by God, and he replied that, whether justice is a benefit or not, he doubted if it was administered in heaven, seeing that on earth God did not deal in it. And anyhow, he would not be a magistrate."

"He is a sacrilegious criminal! Oh, I should like to see him," said my mother, "when he is in that place where God puts them."

"Since he would not be a magistrate nor any other thing they offered, he was thrown upon himself, said my customer, and he was very grave and serious. He came far less into the streets, and when he did come there was only one man who could make him laugh, a man who sold him tickets for the lottery. They used to chase each other round the streets, for they had some old game together which they very much enjoyed, and then he took this man into his house to be his servant. Less and less they saw him in the town, and when he did go out he scarcely looked up from his feet, and he was working for the happiness of everyone! . . . My customer is absolutely sure of it. There was this lonely gentleman at work all through the day with books and books. You, Guadalupe, have not travelled, and you do not know that everywhere about the world are gentlemen who have no other occupation than to sit with books in front of them, because it gives them pleasure. But this Don Arcadio is the only person of the world, so says my customer, who does all this in order to give other people pleasure. When the day arrives and he knows everything he will himself be happy, for he says that happiness can only come in that way."

My father paused. He looked as if this exposition had been a great strain upon him. And he did not want my mother to say anything at all, for he was anxious to collect his thoughts so that he could continue. She, for her part, wanted to say something, since she was completely hostile to the Noheite. She felt it in her inmost being that he was a wicked and perverted man, but she had never come in

contact with a person of this kind before. She felt like one who, with a sword, has to destroy a pestilential mist. . . . I wondered, looking at their very troubled faces, whether it would first be she or first my father who would speak. How they were watching one another !

Then my father said again that when the day arrived and Don Arcadio knew everything he would be happy, for he said that happiness could only come in that way.

"He is one of the crowned devils," said my mother.

But my father went on sturdily : "And after he possesses happiness he will distribute it among us all. And we shall all of us be happy. You," he said, in a severe tone to my mother, "you must be ashamed of speaking in that fashion of so great a benefactor. Think of it ! When everyone is like a day of festival !"

"O *Fuchi* !" cried my mother. "How shall anybody make me happy if I have a husband such as you ?"

"He will have thought of everything," said my father. "He is very great and we shall have to build him one or two triumphal arches decked with flowers. He is called the Noahcite because he follows Noah, and when he has in his own head what was in the head of Noah there will then be nothing he has still to learn. . . . But all these things are not for you or me to question. We are nothing, and I tell you, Guadalupe, that one should be filled with gratitude if our son Juanito has the privilege of living near this mighty man. Come," and he embraced her, "let us cease to quarrel. We are nothing. I confess to you, dear woman, that I do not understand it all, nor does my customer, for when I asked him how it is that Don Arcadio will get his happiness through knowing every-

thing he said he was uncertain. Who are we to try to seek how such a man does this or that ? ”

My mother had been plainly touched. “ There is but one thing, Father Pedro,” she avowed, “ which weighs on me, and it is this, that Noah is a sacred person of the Church, and it is contrary to order for a man to make himself like that. And also if the rage of God does not descend upon him for his pride, it may be that the rage of men will take him, even as it took that mountebank who stood up in the market-place and said there is no God, inviting God to kill him if it was not so. He stood there, the most impious person, with his head thrown back and ‘ *Ca !* ’ said he, for he exulted. ‘ God,’ said he, ‘ thou dost not kill me.’ ‘ No,’ said the inhabitants, ‘ but we do.’ And they did. . . . I fear that if this happens to the man who makes himself like Noah, it may not be well for Juanito to be living near him. If the people set his house on fire and slay our Juanito, what shall we do then ? ” said she.

But with a little gentle reasoning my father made her understand that the two cases were not on a level, since the mountebank had boasted that there is no God, and Don Arcadio, on the other hand, maintained that Noah had existed and was good to imitate. Thereby, my father said, he would not cause offence to anyone in Mexico, except if there was anyone who was an anti-Noahcite. Undoubtedly, somewhere in Mexico there would be found a man with these opinions, for we loved, my father said, to be against all men whatever. That was why the country rolled from turmoil into turmoil. Not a single man could hold authority, but there would be rebellion against him. And above Jalapa, in the dreary region of Mal Pais, or upon the plains of dust and wind and

cactus there would probably be someone who was so embittered against all the leaders, dead and living, whether Mexican or foreign, whether on the land or on the water, that he would be solidly opposed to Noah and to Noahecites.

"Such a man," my mother said, "is dangerous."

"You are the pearl of women," said my father, whose whole countenance was like a hymn of gratitude for life. "But you forget that these rebellious ones can luckily be bought, and if a General who has not much money can obtain, as they have done ere now, the whole insurgent army, or if the insurgent army in the same way can acquire the General's, do you think it would be difficult for Don Arcadio, who is wealthy, to win over this one man?"

"Ah well," said my mother, "you look very pleased and full of confidence. And you know much more of the world than I do."

Thus it came about that my return to Don Arcadio's was agreed upon. And for a few days, while I waited there for Señor Blas, I was a sort of hero in my village. Old and young, they knew that in Jalapa I was being changed into another kind of person, and although I loved them and although they wished me all the good one can imagine, yet I could not keep myself from longing for the coach of Señor Blas. A little time before I had been wont to play with Colorado's other boys on sultry afternoons when it was irksome to wear any clothes. We were as happy as the hours were long, and none of them would ever make the least remark about me living in the house with the verandah, nor would anyone reproach me with the fact that I could read. But now I shrank from playing with my clothes removed, and there was something else which separated me from my dear comrades.

CHAPTER XI

THROUGHOUT the few days that I spent at Colorado I was always being asked to talk about my travels, and among the people who insisted most was Enriqueta, the gay wanton. But she did not join the others when they questioned me ; she seized her opportunities when I was by myself, and once, although I did not like her, she persuaded me to walk with her into the neighbouring wood, and there we sat among the ferns while I began again to tell exactly what had happened to me. But she let me go no further than to the lieutenant's coming on the horse, with sweet Maria at the back of him. How the lieutenant looked, and what he said and what he did—all this she urged me to describe, not once but several times. And she wished heartily that I had not lost sight of him up at Jalapa. But the fact remained that he was there and she confided with me that this was no life in Colorado, and that she had settled not to stay there. By some way or other, even if she had to walk, she would go travelling at last, and, namely, to Jalapa. There had been an hour ago, she told me, the most disagreeable events inside the shop, between herself, Gonzalez and the aged Captain. By the time of our return, she said, there would be no one in all Colorado who would not be able to repeat each word of that unpleasant scene. How could one live in such a place, where nothing could remain your own ?

Apparently, she had employed the hour of the siesta

to inform Gonzalez of her resolution. And the Captain was downstairs outside the shop, because—poor, faithful fool, she said—he then could listen to her voice and not be seen by her. She had most amicably told Gonzalez that if he desired to go with her she would be pleased, and he, of course, had answered by abusing her most harshly, for he could not thus abandon Colorado and the shop. Their argument became so heated that the Captain down below feared that a murder would be done; he did not stop to calculate the peril to himself, but rushed into the house and to the room of the siesta.

“I laughed so much to see him there,” said Enriqueta, “that Gonzalez grew more angry still. But afterwards he was for letting the old Captain hear about my perfidy, and then the Captain, as a military cavalier, should give us his opinion. Well, it was Gonzalez who related the affair, and I put in a word from time to time, and at the end of it all old Bartolmé said stoutly that I had the right on my side, for it was an arrant cruelty to keep a woman such as me in Colorado . . . ‘Oh, you scoundrel,’ cried Gonzalez, ‘did you never keep her in your own most miserable cottage?’

“Angela Maria! You should have beheld the Captain. It was beautiful, the way in which his body stiffened. He was filled with anger, but he was extremely calm, he was majestic. And he said that if he had done wrong in days now past, he thanked the holy saints that he could recognize it and acknowledge it, whereas Gonzalez was an unrepentant sinner . . . But Gonzalez sneered that if one is a weak old man, one frequently repents. He sat upon our bed, his feet were dangling to and fro. And sneeringly he said he would advise the Captain to

behave like those small birds, the huitzitzilin, who sleep all through the winter, a most prudent action if one's blood is cold.

"Oh, yes, you should have seen Don Bartolmé. I never thought that he could be so grand. He tossed his grey old head and then he smiled at me . . . And I was sorry I was lying on the bed.

"Gonzalez had not finished even then. 'I see,' he said, 'the pretty little huitzitzilin does not interest your lordship. It has very handsome plumage, and it sleeps, as I have said, in winter time; but almost as convenient, you will agree, is the peculiarity of living on the very smallest quantity of food. I hear it can maintain itself upon the dew inside a flower.'

"This was too much for the Captain. 'You—you—you would keep my darling Enriqueta here,' he shouted, 'when she wants to run away from her oppressor. And if I from time to time am forced to beg a little food, it is not from your hands that I would take it. No, not even if I were to starve.'

"As he was saying this I rolled off from the bed and stood up next to him. Gonzalez looked at us. He did not yet see that he had been conquered.

"But I told him in the plainest manner that I must go to Jalapa. And he suddenly became so furious that he could say no word.

"Don Bartolmé was thinking still about the question of the food. 'I hope,' he said, 'the day will come for you when you will have a thin, thin broth and you will hope to catch some solid morsel in it, and you will not have Saint Peter's luck, who fished all night in vain till Jesus Christ assisted him.'

"I put my hand on that of the old Captain. How he trembled! And I told Gonzalez that although I

must depart I had some gratitude, and I would always think of him with kindness.

"He looked as if he certainly would choke.

"And then old Bartolmé informed him that he would accompany me anywhere, wherever I might go. He squeezed my hand most violently.

"Well, my little friend, I will admit to you that it displeases me to think of this old man beside me on the journey and beside me always at Jalapa. What am I to do? Oh, may he stand there whistling on the hill . . . Now tell me something more of the lieutenant."

We remained a very long time in the wood, for after I had told her all I knew, which was not much, of the lieutenant, and of Don Arcadio and Faustino and Jalapa generally, and then again of the lieutenant, she lay back among the ferns and thought about the future, sometimes silently, then uttering a word or two, then jerking little laughs into the air. How long we stopped I cannot tell, but we might have remained until the evening if there had not been a voice, the voice of the old Captain, far away among the trees. I thought that Enriqueta, after what she had been saying of the Captain, would be angry or would stop her ears; but how much did I know of women? She arose and took me by the arm and rapidly we went towards the voice; but Enriqueta saw to it that we did not emerge into the open. And at last we found ourselves among such lofty ferns that I could scarcely walk. Don Bartolmé was not far off. We crouched behind those ferns and waited there. And when he did go past he was the strangest sight: he was flourishing his ancient sword and cutting off a leafy branch or else a fern, just as the fancy seized him. He was happy to excess. His age and poverty and

other ailments he had quite forgotten. He was tramping through the wood as if the gods had turned him into a young, merry boy.

And Enriqueta, after he had gone, said she had changed her mind, and that it must be so and that she would permit him to escort her on the journey. "After all," she said, "he loves me. He will be my slave."

The Captain did go with her and on foot a few days after this, when she had made her preparations. I, for my part, had to leave quite suddenly on the next morning—Señor Blas came back much earlier than usual. And so there was no time for me to say farewell to everyone. My parents and some others who were loitering about the coach embraced me, and I drove away, not even knowing whether Enriqueta had gone back to spend her last days with Gonzalez.

We arrived in good time at Jalapa ; and, although my friend and benefactor of the sweetmeats stopped me for a moment as I climbed off from the coach, I very soon was rushing down the Corpus Christi Street. The big door at the house of Don Arcadio was shut, I ran round to the back and through the passage, up the stairs, and to the room in which I hoped to find Maria. But she was not there, nor was my master. And I will confess that I had ugly, very dark and ugly thoughts . . . I wished the room would fall on me and bury me. . . . Then I was on the staircase, I was in the yard, and with a whirling head I passed on, on into the room above the stable. In the room I found my master ; he was sitting with some open books spread out before him, and upon his face the most benign expression in the world.

He welcomed me with all his heart. He saw that

I was very much perturbed and this, he thought, was owing to my coming back to him. So tenderly he spoke, and in my breast I felt as if there was a battle raging. When he asked about my parents, I am not sure what I answered, and I certainly could not control myself enough to tell him of the plans of Enriqueta and the Captain.

"It would make you tranquil," Don Eugenio said, "if you could read with me this part of Bacon's manuscript. I ask for nothing better than to make another voyage through this part. It is indeed a voyage! You may recollect, my son, that when this manuscript was placed before me I was not enthusiastic. Well, I have discovered that this Bacon is among the blessed writers who adorn their subject in a thousand ways, no matter what the subject be."

Then he discoursed with fire and passion on the splendid merits of the doctor mirabilis. But I could only hear quite vaguely what he said, for I was thinking of Maria and the window where I last had seen her, and the sloping fields outside Jalapa where we two had wandered in the dark.

Don Eugenio paused, and then I asked him whether beautiful young girls are sometimes killed by their old lovers, even if the lover has got no suspicion that she has been faithless. And my master, who was always ready to pour out for me his miscellaneous knowledge, did not waste a moment, as so many others would have done, in asking me how I connected this new topic with the observations he had been engaged in making.

"Juanito," so he said, "I am not sorry that you have begun to speculate about some of the problems that we human beings have to face. How this one came into your mind I do not know, but nothing is

more certain than the lack of reason in old lovers, and in young ones. You were thinking of the old, however, and I can inform you of a case with which I was myself concerned. At any rate my bishop, whom I speak of, as you know, with very deep respect, commanded me to write a long, didactic poem on a trial that was heard before the Holy Office many years ago, at Zaragoza. In a neighbouring country district there had dwelt an old man of position, and his young wife, who was marvellously beautiful. She had, to mention only two things, golden hair and eyes of jet—no girl was like her in the kingdom. But the husband was as jealous as a man can be; although he watched her and his servants watched her very carefully, they never could detect her in the slightest sin. And so he gradually came to loathe his young wife and her golden hair. He asked the local priest how he could catch the girl, since she was far too clever for him, and the priest was friendly with a man called Valdes, a familiar of the Inquisition. This official said at once that if the woman was too clever she was certainly a witch, as had been laid down by the good Atheragoras, by Minucius Felix (who, by the way, was an accomplished person, but was not the author of the *Contra Mathematicos*) and by Tertullian in the twenty-second chapter of his Apology. And if she was a witch, she ought, said Valdes, to be rigorously prosecuted. At the trial, nothing could be proved against her; she did not appear to have partaken of unhallowed pleasures or to have used incantations so that wolves could do no harm, or to have brought a toad into the world. She was, in fact, no witch, and she was slain because of her uncommon cleverness. . . . That was the subject of the poem which I wrote, if I may say so, in a metre that was most appropriate

to the argument. My manuscript was bound up, by the bishop's order, in a pale brown calf which had been decorated with his arms and with a pattern of gold tears. He placed the book upon his shelves and there, so far as I know, it remains."

No longer was Maria's face the solitary, all-absorbing question for me. I demanded of my master if the husband also was rigorously prosecuted.

And he said that he had every reason to believe it. "Though we found no further record of the fellow than was in the trial, and though it may often seem to us, dear Juanito, that unrighteous men escape their punishment and even flourish in the most repulsive manner, yet, my son, I cling in many things to the religion of my fathers; and it tells me that the wicked go into Gehenna or into the state which has been variously known as that of outer darkness, of unquenchable fire, of the undying worm, of eternal destruction, of the weeping and gnashing of teeth or of the second death. I hope, my son, that even if in after-life you should have doubts concerning one dogma or another, yet that you will manage to retain your faith in all or some of these dire punishments. It will enable you to be more placid and more patient in your intercourse with those who seem to be unduly prosperous."

My dear master went on talking for a time in this way, until of a sudden, very breathlessly, Maria burst into the room. She smiled at me, but then began at once to tell us of a scene which she had witnessed. There had been a noise of lamentation so prolonged, she said, from Don Arcadio's library that she went in; and there she found Faustino weeping and the Noahcite endeavouring to comfort him. She said the Noahcite was weeping also, but the reason of it all,

she could not guess. And would not Don Eugenio go there to help them ?

He half rose and then sat down again. He asked Maria if they had observed her entrance.

"They looked at me and went on crying just the same," she said.

My dear master frowned a little. "I am out of sympathy," said he, "with people who rush in with words of consolation. It is only in the moments of profoundest grief, Maria, that the large proportion of mankind see through the mist of things that so continuously whirl about them. Is not such a grief the most sublime and sacred temple we can ever build, Maria, and the people with their consolation are like dead leaves blown into the temple ? He who is within is face to face with life, as he may never be again, and those who interrupt with the most beautiful of consolations are dead leaves to him, dead leaves. However . . ."

He sat there rubbing his chin.

"Oh no," said Maria, very earnestly, "I never spoke a word."

Don Eugenio was ruminating. "On the other hand," he murmured, "is it not more likely that their sorrow is an ordinary one and due, perhaps, to some unfortunate misunderstanding. And in that case one wise word may be all that is needed."

"If you like," Maria said, "I will go down and speak to them."

But Don Eugenio said that he would go himself. And as he made his way down from our room, we others followed him and he did not object. He went down to the yard, where one could hear the usual few noises of the town. And even in the house I could myself hear nothing of that lamentation. There was

no sound save our feet upon the floor of stone. Outside the library my master listened for a short time ; then he knocked, and Don Arcadio's voice called out, a little shakily, and asked him to go in.

And there inside the room was Don Arcadio standing up behind a chair in which Faustino sat. The body of Faustino was all huddled up ; he took no notice of us, and not even when my master strode towards him. I remained, so did Maria, at the door.

Then Don Arcadio smiled most sadly and most sweetly on my master. " My dear friend," quoth he, " you come at the good hour. If you can help me with Faustino ! He insists on leaving me."

" Come now," said Don Eugenio to the prostrate one, as he sat down beside him, " have you torn a precious book or had some other accident ? See, Don Arcadio forgives you, and he wants you to forgive yourself as quickly as he will forget."

But that was not the cause of the disturbance. Don Arcadio explained that he by chance had mentioned to Faustino that he might be able to extend the lives of both of them considerably. The power to do this, Don Arcadio said, had been alleged to lie in liquid gold, which was the substance he was occupied just then, said he, in thoroughly investigating. He refrained from an opinion on the efficacy of this liquid gold, but he would make experiments. And that was why Faustino was distressed, for it appeared to him unholy for a man to meddle with the length of his own life, and if his master would persist in such experiments then he would have to go away.

" Well, if your master fails in his experiment," said Don Eugenio, " then presumably you will not have to leave him ? And he will not look upon it as disloyal, I am sure, if you do not assume beforehand

that his act will be successful. Come, Faustino, you are not impetuous by nature, and it seems to me this is entirely an occasion for delay."

Faustino gazed in a dull fashion both at Don Eugenio and his master.

"I am very sorry," said the Noahcite to Don Eugenio, "that this question has arisen, but it is incumbent on me to learn everything there is to learn regarding all the miscellaneous substances of which our earth is made. You will agree that this life-giving property of gold, if we can prove it to exist, is of no small importance."

"Oh, you need not speak so modestly," said Don Eugenio, "for it is of the highest possible importance to detain the beauty of a woman. I have read that this, according to Brantôme, did actually occur in the case of the Duchess of Valentinois, who drank quantities of gold."

"Pardon me," said Don Arcadio, with some dignity, "but I do not claim to preserve mere beauty. It is life that I would keep from premature annihilation." And he stood there like a prophet prophesying glory.

My master shrugged his shoulders. "I for one," said he, "do not think that we should be grateful to you for extending life in general. No, I should disapprove of that."

Faustino nodded vigorously.

"My dear sir, you pain me," said the Noahcite; "I do beseech you not to harbour views of that sort. Why, they are the views of the police! They were, at all events, of the police in Paris when Saint-Léger brought about such marvellous cures. No doubt it was ecclesiastics who incited the repressors; and why did they not influence them somewhat earlier, when the good physician, in whose service was Saint-

Léger, treated with such wonderful success the Emperor Rudolf? Why did not the Church and the police show their displeasure then?"

"Oho," exclaimed my master, "you will have to search through all this town and several others if you want to find a man who can reply to that! Apart altogether from the Church, whom I, her most unworthy son, may not undertake to judge, it sometimes did appear to me that likewise the police were inscrutable. But I know nothing of the Emperor Rudolf. Did he do more with his life than the average Parisian of the period?"

Don Arcadio went over to his large writing-table, he pulled out a drawer and from it took a piece of gold. He held this in his left hand, with raised forefinger, and he solemnly moved backward and forward. "Don Eugenio," said he, "you are a sceptic as to the tremendous powers of this. I hope the day will come when this august material will revenge itself upon you very nobly by making your life longer."

Don Eugenio had a rueful smile upon his face. "If I may for a moment speak about the ordinary services of gold," said he, "then I assure you that I am no sort of sceptic. I have always had so little of it that perhaps I have esteemed it more than was befitting for a student. Since I encountered Juanito, who, as you perceive, has happily returned to us, I have been promised by his admirable father an emolument for giving him some knowledge of the Latin tongue. He pays me quite as much as I shall earn, I think, but it will not enable me to have a tranquil mind concerning this year and the coming years, and that is also something which befits a student more than other people."

"*Hombre !*" said the Noahcite, "why should you agitate yourself about such trifles ? Any money that you want is yours. Let that be understood." He looked as if he would prefer no more allusion to be made to money.

But my master rose—he was extremely serious—and going over to the Noahcite, he put his arms around him.

"It is nothing, it is nothing," said the Noahcite.

"How shall I thank you ?" said my master, as he ceased embracing Don Arcadio. "You are my benefactor. Truly you are one of those whose gifts it is not seemly to decline . . . it would be hindering the sun from doing the great work he loves. Oh, sir, I am obliged to borrow thoughts from the Arabian writers, for your generosity is Oriental. Sir, my feelings overpower me—but it may seem strange to you that a philosopher should care for money."

"No, by no means," said the Noahcite, "for you will set out on your travels when I die."

"My dear, good friend," said Don Eugenio, "you have already given me a roof to sleep under, a table furnished with abundant meat and drink, a conversation which I feel is perfectly unique in Mexico. You are indeed a bountiful and gracious personage. And what can I do in return ? If I were a great poet you should be immortal. Woe is me ! As I have just been telling Juanito, I was once requested by my patron the lord bishop of Zaragoza to compose a lengthy poem so that people should remember a most wicked man ; but even if that poem still remains upon the shelves, I ask you—what has been the good of it ? I believe I used a metre that was well in keeping with the lurid story. What has been the good of it ? I should not be surprised to hear that nobody has

ever read my manuscript. And if I cannot cause a wicked man to be remembered, how much more profoundly shall I fail with a man of merit ? ”

My poor master was so downcast.

But the Noahcite exhorted him to be more cheerful. In the first place, he said, he really did not covet immortality, for he was satisfied with the long years that liquid gold would give him, if indeed it had the power. And in the second place, said Don Arcadio, he really had done nothing.

“ I have an idea ! ” cried Don Eugenio. “ Let me go away with Juanito. In an hour we shall come back and then . . . ! ” He did not wait for a reply, he hurried towards me and together he and I went, almost running, to our room above the stable. When we got there he sat down and made me stand just at his knee.

“ I am going to copy out for my dear benefactor,” he began, “ some phrases of the Arab poets who once used to flourish in all parts of Spain. Don Arcadio’s lavishness is positively Eastern, and he therefore may appreciate the Arab compliments that are of great luxuriance. I sometimes read them in a badly-printed old translation when I was the servant of a bookstall-keeper in Madrid. I do not wish to be sententious, but you see from this how profitable one may find the reading of remote and what seems on the surface to be sterile literature. Presently I shall recall the phrases, you can put them down in your best writing and our dear benefactor will, I hope, be grateful.

“ But first I want to warn you, Juanito, against some of his opinions and his practices. It surely must be wrong for anyone to try to lengthen human life by sorcery ; herein the man appears to me a most

presumptuous and blaspheming villain. As for the advantages of keeping death at bay, I fear that Don Arcadio is no true philosopher, at any rate he has not my philosophy . . . There are some people, Juanito, who assert that they have looked at life in a detached and unimpassioned way, have given it their calm consideration and have come to this or that conclusion. They are fools ! Or will they say that you can be detached and calm and unimpassioned in the midst of battle ? It is one gigantic, rolling battle. Well, we do get on, we do get on and we fall back again. God grant that we are moving forward. But in the meantime we live by ruin and destruction. I have sometimes thought that every act of ours involves an injury—which we may never see nor hear of—this is frequently the case when people have accomplished their one act of greatness, which is dying. Yet on the whole we do less harm, I think, when we are dead than when we live. . . . The more one tries to lead a worthy life the more is one appalled. For instance, there was an old monk whose life had been most saintly during eighty years, and when the abbot came to give him the last sacraments he would insist on kneeling though he scarcely could endure the pain ; he was in such a state of penitence and contrition that one might have thought him the most guilty creature in the world. His abbot, seeing that he was so horrified at all his sins, demanded which of them was causing him the sharpest grief ; he answered that the sin of sins had been a lie which he committed in his childhood. Thereupon the abbot said that little children were incapable of sinning greatly, and he charged him to allow his mind to be at peace. But this the monk refused to do ; he said that now he had another sin upon his conscience, the sin of wasting time, for he had confessed about the lie on

many hundreds of occasions; he had also done severest penance.

“Now,” said Don Eugenio, “let us concern ourselves with those Arabian phrases.”

He walked up and down the room and told me to write very carefully what he dictated.

CHAPTER XII

For the next few days we worked most energetically, Don Eugenio and I. Of course, the help which I could render him was limited, and very often I was much more of a hindrance. He would give me Latin sentences to copy out and learn, while he was busy with his digest of a certain section of the manuscript. But if amid the words he gave me there was one that struck him, if it was an old friend or a new one, he would put his manuscript aside and he would talk at large on any subjects that the word brought up. You who never saw him with his little black cap pushed away from the grand forehead, while his large and ruddy face, in every part of it, was grave and gay, the shadows chasing one another as they do across a sunlit mountain, and the veil of haze which dances so mysteriously over our blue mountains often seemed to dance across the eyes of Don Eugenio, you who never saw my master scarcely will be able to imagine that such various sentiments—to me the most sublime and eloquent and wise and curious of all the world—could issue from the lips of one man. By the way, I am not sure if I would like you to have known him; it is as though I had a shrine in the green forest which no other person can approach.

Well, he used to talk of things which he had seen and done and what he thought. I loved to hear him speak about his failures, which were always made against the side I hated. Sometimes he discussed what he would

do if he were Emperor of Mexico. *Quantula sapientia gubernatur mundus!* And I fear that if my master had succeeded to some throne it might have been delightful for the country, but he would have been assassinated. So was Maximilian, but how different was he! He would have scarcely deigned to listen to my master, for he did not even free the slaves.

Sometimes Don Eugenio would discourse upon a moral or another topic and would interrupt himself to ask me to go down to Don Arcadio and ask the meaning of a Latin geological expression which he could not fathom. Later on we were supplied by Don Arcadio with various authors in the Latin language, such as Joannes Stobæus and Olympiodorus, who had touched these matters, more or less. And those were the proud moments of my life when Don Eugenio asked me to look up in one or other of them for an explanation of some word or phrase in Roger Bacon. I was rather sorry if by accident I hit upon the explanation very quickly; it more often happened that I never found it. We had also, in a Spanish translation, the book which Dioscorides, of Anazarbos, the great army doctor, wrote on minerals.

During these very glorious days we neither of us knew if an arrangement had been made between Faustino and the Noahcite. Perhaps the faithful and most pious servant had agreed to stay till the experiments with liquid gold had either proved successful or had not; perhaps the Noahcite was turning his attention to another branch of his great work. At any rate there seemed to be no jar in their relations, and Faustino went about his business in precisely the same quiet and contented fashion as before.

But now Maria used to come each night into my

room. When Don Eugenio had fallen into his sound slumber she would creep away. I sometimes fell asleep myself before she came, and on the other nights I could not bear to wait so long—I leaned out of the window and I threw myself upon the bed again, and finally I used to feel my way along the corridor till I was outside Don Eugenio's room. If he was not yet snoring I would wait, and I was fiercely hot and cold so that I trembled, and it seemed to me that if he was awake he certainly would hear me. But I could not go away. And in the end the door would softly open and we two would glide together down the corridor.

When we were in my room she loved to tell me that I was a fool for having left it.

And I said that nobody could hear me. I had gone so carefully.

"Some night," she said, "my little Juanito, you will lose the road and stumble down the stairs and kill yourself. *Ay de mí*, what shall I do? Besides, it will make such a noise."

Sometimes I never answered her at all, but grasped her in my arms, and while I kissed her, while her lovely hair was round me and upon my shoulders, I would feel that I was drowning, drowning into endless life. Sometimes Maria would resist me, pushing me away with her open hands or scratching me or spitting, just as if she were a wild thing of the woods, and all her useless struggles made me more and more enflamed. I was surprised at my own strength as gradually I began to overpower her, and then it was her arms no longer pushed against me, but were winding round me and our hearts were one heart singing, singing.

Soon, alas! the moments of enchantment ended,

and as I lay at her side and she still held my hand in hers I used to have another kind of thought.

"Maria, you must leave him, Don Eugenio," said I.

"Oho," she laughed. I could not see her, but I knew what sort of roguish look was in her eyes.

"Maria, will you listen to me?"

She pretended to be shocked. "What gratitude!" said she. "From being nothing in the world he brings you here and lets you be his comrade. Then you turn on him with treachery and try to leave him desolate. Oh fie! I never thought that Juanito would be such a monster."

"But, Maria, do you love me?"

"It is most peculiar," she said, "that you should ask me that. Indeed, I think that it is not polite considering what we have done. You are a savage person, Juanito. And if you continue so against your master, who is the most kind of men, I shall not speak to you another word and you will see if you will like it to be treated sternly or, as they say, to love God in a strange land."

What was this? Was this Maria speaking? Somehow I conveyed to her that she astonished me.

"It is all easy to explain," she said. "You cannot live with Don Eugenio and still be only a poor ignorant and foolish Indian girl."

Perhaps he had been doing miracles on me, but at this instant she had suddenly been raised for me to some extraordinary pinnacle. I felt I must apologise for my embraces. And I did so.

But she interrupted me with laughter of a kind which persons on a pinnacle did not, according to my theories of deportment, use. She merrily rebuked me for my notions and she kissed me, and "My little Juanito, if you think I do not want to be with you,"

said she, "would I be here? You please me. By the wrath of God, it was on the first day that I saw you, when you looked at me with such big eyes of pity as I sat on the lieutenant's horse, it was just then that I decided we would love each other."

Scarcely had she finished speaking than I flung myself again into her arms, and with a new fire blazing in me I pressed kisses here and there and everywhere. The room was filled with music of mad fairies.

She told me that she wanted me to listen to her and she then enjoined me to be thoughtful, more than I had been. "This time will you be so kind," said she, "will you remember that you are not by yourself, and that a gentleman is he who lives in order to please others? Juanito, you are not offended, are you? All the young are selfish till one has instructed them."

"But where did you learn all these things?" I asked, for she amazed me.

It was Don Eugenio again.

I had forgotten her injunction. I was on the point of speaking of him.

"And if I am here," she said, "to-morrow and the next night and the next, and they are all the same to you, then you are a barbarian, says Don Eugenio, and worse. But now I will forget him for a time, my little one."

Presently she also said I was her love and her sweet syrup and her little cat.

I was very glad, because my ignorance had made me feel so humble, and I had been very anxious that she should be pleased with me.

At last, when I was lying there and she was sitting at my side and was caressing me, I thought of Enriqueta and I told her, but she knew already.

"The man who comes on horseback with our milk," she said, "he also takes it up to the lieutenant, and he told me that this woman Enriqueta is in the apartment and that she has asked him to bring you to see her."

"But," I pointed out, "you did not tell me."

"No, I did not," said Maria. "How she came into the hands of the lieutenant, Don Esteban Fuentes, the milkman does not know. But she will not be his good angel, says the milkman, for she swears that she will always be most faithful and will not desert him. She has even told the milkman that in a campaign she will not cease to follow her beloved. Everybody knows that it is only women of the common soldiers who do such a thing—to cook for them and nurse them and look after their belongings, children, dogs and parrots, which the soldier does not carry even if he be on horseback—and then in the middle of a battle if a soldier is uneasy, fearing lest the woman or the burden she has with her is not safe, he can withdraw to where she is and reassure himself. But if an officer goes back out of the battle it is not the same, because he is an officer, and so the woman who is luring him to this is an abandoned woman."

"Anyone would think," said I, "that you are fond of the lieutenant."

"Oh, that shameless one! But it is you I love." She bent down over me and was most tender.

And I hoped that she would soon sit up and talk again, but when she did it was about us two.

"How did I ever live," said she, "without you? I was waiting for you, I suppose. I really like you very, very much, my Juanito. And I only hope that you like me as much as that."

"Oh yes," said I.

"This woman Enriqueta," she went on, "has told the milkman that she will be faithful always, as if anybody should be faithful always ! She has fastened herself on to him and how much can she love the man if she remains with him when they no longer love each other ? . . . In my village there are two inhabitants, the one an old man who is called Jacinto, and a handsome old woman who is Catalina. Now and then they see each other at the large tree where the people sit, and there they have a little gossip. Once they lived together and had many children, who are men and women of that village and of other parts. Jacinto never married Catalina, for they were not rich enough to pay the fees, and even if they had been they would not have married ; and when both of them were old and deaf and quarrelsome they lived apart, which was a very good arrangement. But a young priest came from Europe, and he scarcely settled down before he wanted to reform the village, and he started with these two old people. First he said that they must marry, but they utterly refused. He tried to make them, and he failed. And then he said, at all events they must not live apart. But for a long time he could not persuade them even to do this. He talked to them and talked to them about the glory they would have in heaven if they were good people, and he shouted at them of the flames in which bad people had to burn. He shouted at them privately and when he preached a sermon in our church, and everyone enjoyed it, for the priest we used to have before him had been very gentle with regard to all these matters, and the people knew that he was right. The young man still continued with his raging, and I think it gave him pleasure also, for the church was always full and everybody listened with great care,

and also the young priest thought he had come into our village like an early martyr of the Church, a pioneer, and he determined to be just as bold and desperate as they had been. And in the end he took a torch and set on fire the little house of Catalina, so that she should be compelled to go into Jacinto's house. And that is what she did, and all the people of the village laughed. But Catalina and Jacinto fought each other all day long, and then he threw her out and there was nowhere else for her to go, because the other people were afraid that any dwelling which received her would be set on fire. And thus she marched into the house of the young priest, with all the village looking on. He could not order her away, and so she stayed there and became his mistress."

While Maria told me this affecting story I could feel her little laugh go rippling through me, and she must have known it, for she asked me if I would not look at the nice ornament which hung upon her breast. It was not shining much, and I had to get near to it to see it properly. And the result was that my mind went back to other thoughts. These were encouraged by Maria in her irresistible and most endearing fashion, and it grieved me that she should be growing more and more vivacious just when I was very tired. But I vowed I would not let her scoff at me for that, and it would likewise have been lacking in all courtesy if I had disappointed her. And I am glad to say that I was able to prevent her feeling any wrath. She was the sun, and flowers sprang to life within me.

But naturally it was difficult for me to concentrate myself a few hours later on my work. While Don Eugenio was busily engaged in making the most eloquent translation of a passage—for he always said that easy reading is not brought about by easy writing

—I would sit and dream. I watched the pale clouds as they drifted gracefully across the dome of our blue sapphire sky, and as they separated into little fleets of sailing boats and as they wandered pitifully with no pilot or as they began to sink into the sea of sapphire. I was sorry for them, they would never know Maria.

“Will you be so good,” said Don Eugenio, “as to look up several words for me in that translation of our Dioscorides. But I observe that you are disinclined to work this morning. Let Pedacius or Pedanius Dioscorides be an example to you ; he was famous for his industry and for the patience he devoted to research. He fell, no doubt, into most grievous errors and inaccuracies, but his talents are not to be blamed as much as the defective state of science when he wrote. Posterity will never blame you, Juanito, if you are less perfect than itself. And if you are industrious I will not blame you either.”

I murmured that I had been thinking.

“Ah, my son,” said he, “I should not like to know how much time that has wasted since the world began. When you are older you will see on every side, for instance in a library, the proof of how men have flung all their lives away in this pursuit. Perhaps there was a good philosopher of Augsburg in the sixteenth century who spent his life in thinking that a certain branch of knowledge should be propagated and he wrote a hundred books about it ; then his grandson spent his life in thinking that this branch was fatuous and obsolete and to be extirpated, and he wrote a hundred books. And if these two hundred are not all forgotten they distract us with their rival claims. I would impress upon you, my dear son, that we are not obliged to think with this philosopher or that—we need not think at all. When I was in the seminary of

that famous capital which I shall never see again, they taught me that the thinking on all subjects of importance had been done already by the Fathers of the Church. Now there are two ways, I was told, of thinking—one is right and one is wrong, one is of the Church and one is of the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Moors, the murderers, the tyrants, the false witnesses, the usurers and all such people. If I thought of anything myself there was a chance that I would hearken to the whisper of some devil or philosopher and not think as I ought to do. And therefore it was certainly less dangerous if I refrained from thinking. I need only learn and then remember what the Church taught. It might be that now and then a person who was not inside the Church would have the right thoughts with regard to one or two things, but that was no more than accident. The thoughts of man are wounded birds, they told me, for their range is very small. And anyone who trusts himself to them is more than rash.

“How different it is, my son, with those thoughts which have been provided by the holy Church, for they are indestructible, immutable and universal. Sometimes they may seem ridiculous, but that, I was informed at Zaragoza, is a sign that we have lost the beautiful simplicity of mind which flourished in those far-off, pastoral days. The thoughts provided by the Church may seem to us entirely childish and when that occurs the reason is that we are ageing. Oh, let us recapture those great thoughts, so placid and profound! My teachers in the seminary, when I questioned them, admitted that if one should have inside one’s head no other thought save what the Sacred Fathers had laid down, there would arise between one’s fellow-creatures and oneself embarrass-

ment, misunderstandings and recrimination. This, however, would be due exclusively to the deplorable back-sliding of our fellow-men, whose thoughts had been so changed. It was our duty, then, despite the physical and moral opposition that we would encounter, to have in one's mind exclusively these venerable thoughts. But they admitted also that it is not always easy to remember them, indeed that we should often stand in gravest jeopardy of not remembering if we were unassisted by that grace which sometimes we, who are such miserable sinners, are in no condition to receive.

“ But after having made myself as like a Sacred Father as my strength allowed me, I was recommended not to waste my time in thinking, but to act. Is it not true that of the greater saints a handful have achieved their crowns by holy thinking, while a multitude have gained them by some holy deed ? Christianity, my child, says that it is the faith of the sincere and humble, and so largely are the saints selected from the ranks of active rather than of meditative men that it would seem as if the chance of being made a saint is in proportion as the candidate's activity of body is superior to his activity of mind. Thus in the hierarchy of saints the one who was admitted with least opposition is the one who thought the least. And whereas there is no man of any vile profession and no woman of the most antique for whom there may not be a halo, one imagines that the preference is given to such people as are heedless, careless, inattentive, flighty, giddy, and, in fact, devoid of the capacity for thought. Yet the possession of these qualities will not suffice ; the energy that would be needed to suppress them must be used in doing noble and good acts, of which a great variety have in the

Christian Church been recognized as meriting a saintship. So, my Juanito, you will gather that if it is true what I was taught and what I deduce therefrom, you should not put yourself to inconvenience in learning what the world, which is so vain and transitory, may esteem ; but rather you should strive to do some deed which is agreeable to God."

I had been thinking that my master's words were wonderful and pious, but as I applied them to myself I dreaded having to cease learning Latin at the hands of Don Eugenio, and besides, I had no furious desire to be a saint. I ventured to inform my dear, good master of these sentiments.

"Juanito," he replied, "your honoured father, who no doubt is talking of us to his fighting-cocks, shall not be disappointed, nor shall you, for since the Latin language teaches us to read those Sacred Fathers you may cultivate it with an easy mind. And as for these ideas concerning act and thought, my son, one cannot help admiring them. Consider how a Church is glorious which raises up the simple and the unoriginal to the confusion of the others ! How far-reaching a reward that Church can have, since it appeals to men who do not glitter with intelligence and surely the prevailing spirit of the human race looks angrily at intellect. Oh, the grandeur of the Church that solves in so complete a fashion all our little gropings, all our doubts ! Oh, the celestial wisdom ! Oh, the light from heaven which conducts the poor and purblind, while it dazzles utterly the men who fondly thought that they could see a little ! Oh, miracle ! Oh, wonder of the universe ! Oh, wise commandment which is greater than all earthly wisdom ! And, my son, I could, if it were needful, give you many very adequate examples of promotion to the highest place

of men and women who refused to think for themselves. Saint Leonardo of the Order of Saint Francis was, while still a boy, so glad to let his elders think for him that on returning to his uncle's home from church he sat repeating all that he had heard there while his supper grew quite cold. There is the edifying instance of the Venerable Vianney, of the diocese of Lyons, who preferred to practise the renunciation of his will instead of corporal austerities. 'We have nothing of our own,' said he, 'except our will, and it is that which I must sacrifice to God.' And assuredly obedience could no further go than with the blessed Bonaventura of Potenza, who even after death was guided by the thoughts of others. It is told that when his corpse, exhaling a sweet odour, was borne in procession through the village street, one of the carriers ordered him to lift his arm so that a vein might be perforated by the doctor, and his blessed arm, whose every movement had been regulated by the will of others, raised itself. Now there are many, many more examples of this virtue of not thinking for oneself; and yet, my son, I never could accept that precept of the seminary. It is all too probable that I have thrown away my time in thinking, but do you remember those philosophers of Augsburg whom I told you of? Well, even if oblivion has settled over every one of their two hundred books I still believe that honest thoughts, if they are written or if they are not, have just the same chance as an honest man of being dowered with eternal life. . . . And now you will oblige me, Juanito, by returning to the Dioscorides, for there are in this otherwise attractive manuscript some technical expressions which are just as dark to me as were the horses of Poseidon, and yet some of those Etruscan vases give him both a white horse and

a black one. Oh, there is no single question that we can be sure of! We are shadows passing in a world of shadow! And I spend my time in studying geology, which has to do with solid things."

Then Don Arcadio's long figure stalked into the room. He looked in an appreciative way at my dear master, and said gravely that it was most true.

"In fact," said he, "that science is associated with the solid things of life in more than one way. Is it not a privilege that you and I should be engaged upon it?"

"Señor Noahcite," said Don Eugenio, "I have been talking rather philosophically to my pupil, so much so indeed that I do not feel, at this moment, sure of anything."

"But you are sure about the virtues of geology, at all events?" said Don Arcadio.

"If I may say so," said my master, with a smile of tired amusement, "you are standing there with the appearance of an army sergeant. Yes, and you recall to me an episode. I said just now that I do not feel sure of anything and I agree that it is much more comfortable if you can be sure of everything, as was that sergeant I am going to tell you of—he knew exactly how to treat the foe, because he knew that they possessed no single moral quality, not fortitude, not valour and not even truthfulness. One day his men were burying a little heap of them, and presently a soldier came to him and said that that one yonder could not be included, for he was not dead. 'Bury him, I say,' growled the sergeant. Away went the soldier and came back again. 'We can't bury that man,' said he, 'because he is not dead at all.' 'Bury him,' growled the sergeant. A second time the man went back and once more he returned. 'We can't

bury him,' said he, 'he is not dead.' 'And how do you know that?' growled the sergeant. 'He says so himself,'* replied the man. 'How often have I told you,' said the sergeant, 'that you are not to believe a word they say?' . . . This is the story," said my master. "Do you think," he said, with some anxiety, "that I am not a person of sufficient seriousness? I do assure you that I have been reading this old manuscript with concentration, and I have been earning all the money you so kindly promised me, but which—which . . ."

"Are you ready for another manuscript?" enquired the Noahcite. "I have received some more from Europe from my correspondents."

I could see that Don Eugenio had intended to pursue the subject of the salary which was as yet unpaid. However, he did nothing more than shrug his shoulders and "I hope," said he, "your manuscripts have turned out to be valuable."

"Thank you," said the Noahcite. "I shall be satisfied if they are half as valuable to me as to the eyes of the officials in the custom house at Veracruz. It is a monstrous thing that one should have to pay on manuscripts. The law says nothing, but the Chief Official writes me that I must be patriotic and allow him to assess my imports so that Maximilian's Government may have more funds. And what do I care for this Government or any other that we have? The Chief Official tells me that it is untrue to call it either futile or extravagant, and finally, he says, it stands between us and a Government of Juarez, the Liberal leader. And he says it would be dreadful to be ruled by Liberal bandits, who prevent the priests

* See Note I., p. 312.

from owning what they like and doing what they like. He says it is my glory to assist the Empire in this way, and he regrets the conduct of the British Minister five years ago—a diplomat of insight and a statesman, says the Chief Official, would not have gone out of Mexico because it had seemed well to the authorities to enter the legation and appropriate 660,000 pesos. A Government, says he, which has got no resources is not merely pitiable but also dangerous.”

“Perhaps,” said Don Eugenio, “that Government alone is good which makes itself superfluous.” Then suddenly he had a brilliant idea. “Señor,” he cried, “why should not you and I pack up these books and manuscripts and maps and all the rest of it, and travel to some other country? Juanito’s father would, I think, raise no objection. You and I and Juanito and Maria and Faustino—let us go!”

For a little time the Noahcite walked up and down the room, his hands behind his back. And then he stopped and shook his head. “No, no,” said he, “what is the use of it? We may find something even worse. And, though I am without experience of any other country, it may be that those which to a stranger seem the kindest and most hospitable, are in truth the most exacting. At any rate, I have a pamphlet which was written a few years ago by some indignant Nicaraguans (but published in Honduras) when their Government was in the hands of General Walker, the American, known as the filibuster. It is stated in the pamphlet that all new American arrivals in the country are presented with so many acres and are thus made citizens of the Republic, eligible for such offices as may appeal to them. The Nicaraguans who have a like ambition must be honourable men, but for the new arrival there is no such obligation.

Well, who would not go to Nicaragua ? Apparently, a married couple of these immigrants receive an extra hundred acres, but the pamphlet says that 'very often they are only married civilly, which is the purest concubinage, and this does not hinder them from having children, in accordance with their democratic, filibustering ideas.' So Nicaragua, which looked more generous than any country I had heard of, is, indeed, exacting. And I fear that it is much the same with all the others . . . But would you care to take a stroll ? I have not left the house for many days and that is really why I came here. Faustino says that I must take a walk."

"Most willingly," said Don Eugenio ; and, as the Noahcite turned round, my master made a sign to me and so we followed him.

CHAPTER XIII

As my master and the Noahcite walked slowly on the narrow footpath, I myself ran down the hill in front of them. This was the street of memories—Maria and the twilight and the rocking-chairs of those who gazed at us—but now as I ran down it in the sparkling brilliance of the morning it appeared to me as if the morning was a river, gay with music, and upon that river all my memories were flakes of snow. It was delightful to be running down the street.

And where the town comes to an end I saw both Enriqueta and old Captain Bartolmé Robledo as they were returning over the stone bridge that leads into the open country. She was sitting very proudly on a horse, behind her was a soldier-servant on another horse, and poor Don Bartolmé was trudging through the dust. Perhaps he had put on his ancient uniform—which, you may recollect, was only his for having stolen it from a dead officer—he may have put it on in order to win favour in the eyes of Enriqueta. But she was not paying him the least attention, and the soldier-servant looked like one of those who do not take an interest in anything. The dust lay in large patches on the Captain's uniform, which once had been dark blue ; it lay upon his careworn face and hairy bosom, for he had unfastened a few buttons of the tunic. He was panting very much, and as he lurched along I was afraid that he would fall. And Enriqueta sat there like the cruel eagle of the arms of Mexico,

which has the serpent tightly in her talons. I had never seen her look so ruthless and magnificent and beautiful. She may not have observed me ; anyhow, she took no notice and the three had passed me, and I still was gazing at them when my master and the Noahcite came down the street, and all together we went on across the bridge.

The Noahcite was talking. "But the other day," said he, "you were reluctant to agree that liquid gold confers a benefit by lengthening our life. Indeed, you doubted whether such phenomena were possible. And with regard to other substances of which our earth is made, I fear that you will not believe in their great properties, whatever these may be, and so we two will be compelled to argue endlessly. But, on the other hand, I have been thinking that if all these substances can be transmuted into one another we shall merely have to know the properties of one, and when we are agreed on those we shall be thoroughly acquainted with the properties of all the numerous and interesting substances which go to form our earth. And that will be a notable step forward. When we once have settled what is in this earth we will know perfectly what lay in Noah's head. Yes, we will know this even better than he knew himself, because the very large proportion of his powers lay within him in a dormant or, I should say, latent state."

"I wonder if he could see people who were yet unborn," said Don Eugenio.

"By careful study on the lines which I have indicated," said the Noahcite, "we shall ere very long know all about him. But we must work back to him, as I explained, not through the wayward generations, but through earth, which is to-day what it was then."

"I wonder what the good man thought of us," said Don Eugenio.

"And how convenient," said the Noahcite, "if all these miscellaneous substances of earth can be transmuted into one another. Mind you, I do not say that it is so; but I am investigating. I have thrown myself these last few days most ardently into the question, ardently and with a palpitating hope. Think how much nearer it would bring us to the goal!"

By this time we were a good distance from Jalapa, and I thought that Don Eugenio, who was not built for walking more than necessary, would sit down against a tree or else against a stone which here and there had risen over its old comrades of the ancient road and had perhaps received a covering of roses or of moss. But yet he persevered, and Don Arcadio looked as if he would walk up to the green mountains and the blue ones.

"It is natural," said Don Arcadio, "that all the transmutations which we read of deal with sundry metals being turned to gold."

"For my part I am ready to believe," said Don Eugenio, "that if one metal can be changed to gold then you can change one metal into any other metal that you like. When Saint EUGRACIA, whose unworthy hagiographer I am, was buried, eighteen angels came, according to a good account, to give assistance at the funeral. And there are people who reject the tale because it would be an astounding incident for eighteen angels to appear at anybody's funeral. But, as I pointed out, if you are willing to believe in one angel, then it wants no greater faith to believe in hundreds."

"And I suppose you will agree," said Don Arcadio,

“that if one can transmute a little metal into gold one can transmute a limitless amount?”

“I undertake that I would never, never ask you for another piece of gold,” said Don Eugenio, “if I knew how to make it. Why should I want to have a store of diamonds if I could get them out of carbon with more ease than from Golconda?”

“Señor ex-librarian,” said the Noahcite, “you may not have pursued the subject, but it seems to me that there are ample precedents for the successful transmutation of a metal into gold. I have examined the good work of Michael Sendivogius, the Moravian, whose real name was Sensophax. He helped the alchemist called Sethon to escape from prison, but could not persuade him to reveal the secrets of the powder which had been the cause of his incarceration and most fearful torments. Later on, however, Sendivogius inherited this powder and, despite the troubles into which it plunged him, he continued to employ it in transmuting metals into gold, and was, indeed, so anxious to enlarge his stock of powder that he married Sethon’s widow, only to discover that she could not make it. And I ask you, would the persecution of him have proceeded if his power had not been effective? Would the Polish nobleman have laid an ambush on the road and seized him and confined him in a dungeon, out of which he managed to escape, a naked man, but with the powder? Would Duke Frederic, of Würtemberg have entertained him and conferred on him a title if the powder had been useless? And the rival alchemist who was attached to Frederic’s court, would he have treacherously urged our Sendivogius to fly and then overtaken him with twelve armed men and robbed him of the powder and imprisoned him again? No, everything appears to

show that he was able to transmute another metal into gold. We need not ask about the composition of his powder any more than we need ask about the marvellous philosopher's stone. It is enough that it exists."

"Yes, yes," said Don Eugenio, "but why then have they not converted into gold our rocks and stones and mud and all this earth?"

"And thus have nothing left to do?" said Don Arcadio. "What princes then would humbly crave their presence and would shower gifts upon them? And, moreover, it is sometimes the employer's fault that alchemists do not convert a substance into gold. For example, it was Henry the Sixth of England who—dissatisfied with the rate at which the gold was being manufactured—caused his alchemists to occupy themselves with making him an amalgam of copper, out of which he struck false money."

For a little time my master and the Noahcite walked on in silence, each engaged with his own thoughts.

And then the Noahcite said that he spoke on the authority, not of such bygone heroes as Spinoza or Leibnitz, but of the most recent scientific coryphæi, who asserted that it is by no means foolish to admit that all matter is one and that there are irreducible atoms which, in their agglomeration submitting to various laws, perhaps to a single one, take every form upon themselves. Thus, all imaginable transmutations cease any longer to appear impossible. What we must do is to discover the simple irreducible body and then the laws which it obeys in the assumption of those multiple forms which it affects."

"Oh, well, I do not say," quoth Don Eugenio, "that I do not believe in all these things. For at the bottom of my heart I cannot help believing in

the holiness of man, and this requires, you will agree, a faith more stubborn than is wanted for the school of any alchemist. What they assert is capable of proof and therefore less sublime than those exalted things which I believe and which, if God does not abandon me, I shall not cease believing with my latest thought, however contrary to reason and ridiculous they may appear. Amen . . . But I should like to have the smallest proof, dear friend, of your ability to turn metal into gold."

"Oh, listen to him! There is nothing easier," cried Don Arcadio, "and I will do it instantly. I would, that is to say, if I possessed the needful apparatus. But I will go home and I will read about the exploits of some others of the grand alchemical philosophers."

He stopped and turned and walked away from us. My master also did not hesitate, but strode along with great determination and he did not once look round. At last he spied a ruined wall which stood inside a grove of flowering myrtles at a little distance from the road. He climbed up and I climbed up after him, and then we saw that we were in the ruins of a convent. It had evidently been destroyed a long time, for the whole interior was a thicket of rank vegetation. Don Eugenio found a place where we could sit against the wall, with purple flowers growing at our back, and then he told me that he would be glad if I rejected some of these extraordinary notions of the Noahcite.

"Whatever he may say," said Don Eugenio, "I think the changing of a baser metal into gold would not have God's approval. I will tell you why. 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is

righteous, let him be righteous still : and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' That is from the Bible ; does it not lay down that baser substance should not hope to be converted into gold ? And yet—and yet . . . But this I do know, that to some God gives great beauty and to others ugliness. He is not a huckster with a pair of scales, who compensates with sundry virtues those of us who are deficient in this gift or that. It surely is most impious to say, as people do, that God does not allow the beautiful to have the same amount of other estimable qualities as have the rest of us."

He brushed a fly from his large forehead and leaned back and smiled. But then another thought came over him. "That fellow," he exclaimed, "that Noahcote, that spagirist, with the agglomerating atoms which submit to laws ! Am I to think of Enriqueta as a mere assemblage of these atoms ? And even as they came together so will they, with absolute indifference, depart from one another ! *Bueno*, but they make a very pleasing picture. The dear girl ! No, I will not brood on her transitory atoms any more than she does."

"Did you see her on that horse," I asked, "and Don Bartolmé ?"

"Yes, and even if I am entirely wrong in what I said of God's design—I should not be astonished if it can be proved, by copious quotations, that it is the very opposite and that a lower metal should be turned to gold, and that there is no lower metal in the sight of the Creator—yet I am pleased that we have talked of God before we talk of Enriqueta, for it is the custom of those people, Don Arcadio's new protégés, who sally out in search of the philosopher's stone, to make a start by turning their unbalanced

minds to the All-Powerful. And as for Enriqueta, you will not have seen how grandly beautiful she has become. In Colorado she was at a disadvantage, owing to the meanness of her situation. Here, it seems to me, she is redoubtable, she is serene, she is the princess of that fairy tale who thought she was a farmer's servant till she wandered out into the world and found the Kingdom of her ancestors. But what will Enriqueta do? One sees that she has made a friend already. It is to be feared that she will cause some bloodshed; for I apprehend that she is no more virginal in her behaviour than this place in which we sit is like a convent . . . Yet, after all," said he, "why should one deplore so much the quarrels she will bring about? Is it not a nobler and more sacred thing to let your blood flow for the sake of beauty rather than for politics? And Mexicans, apparently, insist that it shall flow. But if the country were to fight on account of one beautiful woman, they would understand why they are fighting. By the way, the most austere advocate of warfare would be satisfied, because the struggle, for the very large proportion of the combatants, would be without hope of personal benefit. And everyone would understand what he is fighting for. Those poor devils of Indian soldiers in this country, do they understand why they are made to kill each other?" . . . He looked at me, his eyes aflame with honest indignation and with pity.

And I gazed at him.

"Poor devils! And the soldiers of all other countries!" . . . He was panting. But, as he continued looking at me, he began to shake his wise old head. "And you," said he, "my Juanito, if you really understand what is a virgin you will not do as the vulgar folk one day when I was in Madrid, for

someone asked a little boy, who had been taken to the pictures at the Prado, what a virgin is, and he said that it is a woman with a child. Of course, the foolish people laughed. But, Juanito, if in course of time you should forget whatever I have taught you, this, at all events, I beg you to remember—that we, if we dare condemn the morals of our fellow-creatures must condemn no woman, for so many of them are like water-lilies that are virginal and white, though rooted in repulsive mud. The time will come for you, my son, when you will love the sex; to love is to understand, but you will find that you must love woman a great deal before you can understand her a little.”

Later on, as we were going back towards Jalapa, I explained to Don Eugenio how it was my fault that Enriqueta had arrived, and how it was that she had come to our lieutenant.

“Ah, well,” quoth my good master, “let us hope that God has given him the gift which is greater than beauty, I mean the power of appreciating it. We must lose no time in going to that house.”

I wondered if my master would remove her, even as he took Maria from the same lieutenant in the forest.

Once we were inside the town it was not difficult to find the place where Don Esteban Fuentes lived. The loiterer who took us to the top of that particular street, and was carefully polishing his nails as he strolled along, would surely not have left us had he noticed what was happening at the house. Don Bartolmé, the poor old captain, who was seated on a bench outside it, looked as if his sufferings had made him numb. His arms hung limply down, and though the dust, which was all over him, was even

on his mouth he did not seem to care. The noise of a guitar and singing came out of the open windows of a room above him, on the first floor. It was Enriqueta and Don Esteban Fuentes singing.

When we halted opposite the Captain and saluted him, he nodded at us with no sign of pleasure or astonishment. He nodded at us, and his head continued moving up and down.

"My friend," said Don Eugenio, "may pleasant days await you in Jalapa."

We could hear them singing, with emotion, that romance by Juan Meléndez Valdés :

"Welcome, welcome, lovely rain,
The refreshment of our valleys.
You are bringing us abundance
As you pass along the land."

"Forgive me for intruding," said my master, "but I hope that you are not a follower of Epicurus. How magnificent is our religion which proclaims that they are blessed who suffer. And that is why the Epicurean loses faith in religion. Blessed are those who mourn, my friend. It is sorrow which tests and awakens the generous sentiments ; it arms against pleasure ; it fertilises."

And the song continued :

"Beautifully you bring life
To the flowers which are bursting
To receive you, which no longer
Can remain within the bud."

Suddenly Don Bartolmé Robledo shook his fist at my good master. "You torment me !" he exclaimed. "You are the children of the devil, you and she and all of them ! And why have you come here to mock

me? Do you think that you are doing good, forsooth?"

Don Eugenio sat down beside the angry man. He laid a hand upon his leg and looked at him with tears in his blue eyes.

"Well, well, is it not so?" said the Captain.

"The good which I can do," said Don Eugenio, "talking to you is perhaps extremely small. I would to God that it were different. It may be that great benefits come out of grief, but when our heart is fluttering against its barriers the heavens seem to shrink around us and we break our heart against another cage. My friend," said Don Eugenio, with a smile of brave encouragement—a tear was passing down his cheek, he let it pass—"my friend," said he, "however grey and poor the world may seem to you, I wager that to scores of other people it is . . ."

"How much will you wager?" asked the Captain.

"*Hombre!* you have killed the shadows," said my master. "You have a mightier sword than this one," said he, as he touched the Captain's weapon.

"But I say the world is . . ."

"Let us listen to the music," said my master.

We could hear the voices overhead and the guitar. They sang with fervour:

"Oh, the colours are more radiant
Than the pearls of your bestowing,
And the ground on which you break
You adorn with diamonds."

"After all," said Don Eugenio, "we should be grateful, you and I, for those who sing to us. Have you not seen old, venerable men who crown themselves with vine-leaves and go capering about a village, while the merciful and righteous people yearn to veil

their eyes and sometimes veil them? Surely if the young had . . ."

And the song continued :

"Come down, come, you shall appease
The hunger of the dusty field.
What you touch will dance again
And old age will be forgotten."

"If the young had been more natural, more joyous," said my master, "then the old would have been satisfied to play their part and listen. What a worthy picture we present," said Don Eugenio, "we two old men who sit here on the bench and . . ."

"Is that why you came?" the Captain said.

And just then I saw the lieutenant at the window. He put both his arms upon the wood-work and gazed downwards. He was smiling. And before my master answered Don Bartolmé I saw Enriqueta also. She stood there beside her friend, she leaned against him, and she signalled to me several things and very amiably.

I think if Don Bartolmé asked his question in all innocence he quickly grew suspicious, owing to my master not replying. It may be his question took my master unawares, but on the other hand perhaps it was that Don Eugenio did not deign to tell a falsehood, for he was the noblest and the most illustrious of men.

"Aha," the Captain cried. "I know exactly why you came. We are two brothers!" And he put his arm around my master's neck, and with his other hand, a bony, yellow hand, he stroked my master on the cheek. I could not bear the way in which Don Bartolmé was laughing.

But the dignified expression of my master was as great as it was wonderful.

"Now," babbled the old man, "now tell your little brother what you thought that that you would do."

The pair above were listening most eagerly.

And when my master spoke—not making any effort to remove the two obnoxious hands of Don Bartolmé—he was very grave. "In ancient times," said he, "it used to be considered arrogant for anyone to make a loud enumeration of his sins, except when the concealing of them might involve the guiltless. I have no desire, however, to be shielded by that custom of the Jews. They had another salutary precept, recommending criminals to make confession at a distance of ten cubits from the place where they were to be executed. I believe I am within that distance of the object on account of which I sinned, and so I will confess. But, first of all, it has been said that evil is a necessary thing if moral beings are to do good works and to be good. If evil then be necessary, is it not justifiable? Can we condemn what must be? If a thing is necessary is it not, in a sense, good?"

"Oh, that is talking like the devil!" said Don Bartolmé.

"I was coming to that," said my master, "for in your invective, if you will remember, you denounced, not only me but Enriqueta and, I think, everybody else as being children of the devil. Have you meditated on the devil, Don Bartolmé? Look at his position. He is given certain qualities, lust, foulness, concupiscence, and the others which they tell him he must exercise; because it is essential that there should be opposition between fair and foul, between wisdom and folly, so that human beings may achieve this or that other virtue. It is only by a wound that a caress is understood, and we are put into this transitory world that we may understand the value of the

world, which is eternal. So the devil, with his evil attributes, is playing a tremendously important part."

"Oh, yes!" cried Don Bartolmé, in excitement. He looked like a faithful dog which, in the middle of a long, long sentence, hears a word it understands.

"And all the time," said Don Eugenio, "the devil knows how indispensable he is, for his superior intelligence is always vaunted; even by the hostile critics it is said to be not less in volume than his peccability. Now what would happen if he should decline to play his part?"

The Captain shook his head. "Who knows?" quoth he. "Who knows what then would happen . . . Oh, by the holy saints, he would no longer trouble us and we should all be glad. Yes, that is it!"

"There can be no light if there is no darkness," said my master, "seeing that it is impossible to think of any light which does not illuminate. Darkness alone is capable of being lit. Without darkness the light would have no opposition it can work upon, that is to say, it would not light and it would not be the light withal. And so God cannot work without the devil. It is constantly implied in sacred writings that the devil's sway has been permitted that it may be over-ruled. Moreover, he is always being told that his power can be resisted by the will of man, when aided by the grace of God. Well, suppose that he should take into his head to retire from the business. I can tell you that his great Opponent would be very much embarrassed. Hitherto, however, he has stayed at work . . .

"Many people have their doubts to-day concerning this or that tradition of our fathers, and they frequently have said that I must follow them, as if my own doubts were not more than ample. But in this

matter of the devil I am very steadfast. I am with the popular beliefs and customs and practices and old tales of warning and fairy-tales and general conversation, in all of which, despite the efforts to the contrary, he plays a part that is by no means insignificant. His task it is both to direct and organize the heresies, the errors, the superstitions, the fanaticism and indifference, the enervation of ease, the dangers of wealth and poverty . . . Let me ask you, Captain Don Bartolmé, is there anyone for whom, in view of all the circumstances, you can feel a sorrow more profound ? ”

Don Bartolmé looked extremely solemn.

“ Any single person ? ” said my master.

The poor, battered Captain groaned, and, gazing with a dull eye into space, he said that he was very, very sorry for himself. “ What have I done,” said he, “ that I should have all these misfortunes ? I am weary in this town and I have nowhere I can sleep, and, as for food, I have to beg. How beautiful it was in Colorado at the house of Pedro, the good father of that boy. He never stinted me the beans and the sweet oranges, and sometimes part of the well-peppered mess or else the stew which travellers had left uneaten, and sometimes a soup made of the little fishes they brought up from Veracruz, and sometimes I could put my finger in the chocolate his good wife was preparing with the goat’s milk, and they never made me talk while I was eating.”

Don Eugenio arose and took the Captain by the arm. “ You must go with me to the Noaheite’s,” said he.

“ Yes, very willingly,” said Don Bartolmé.

And as they were starting I saw the lieutenant at the window, who was with his mouth half-open, but

uncertain what to say. And Enriqueta whispered to him and cajoled him, and he shut his mouth.

My master and the Captain, arm in arm, walked up the street. And I had never seen the Captain limp so grievously, not even when he had been following, an hour ago, the horse of Enriqueta. That old sword of his made such a shrill noise on the pavement.

CHAPTER XIV

THERE can be no doubt that if we had remained in Don Arcadio's house the poor old Captain would have been provided with a home. But on the morning after his arrival Don Arcadio stalked into my room and bade me follow him. He told me, on the way, that our departure for the State of Tamaulipas would no longer be delayed, and as we reached the library he pointed to that ancient map which hung upon the wall.

"The time has come," said he, "when I must make investigations there, because the people of this country seem to be more agitated, and if I can give them gold they may not think so much of revolution as of other things."

I gazed at him and at the map.

"You naturally will object," said he, "that gold may lead them to commit iniquities, which are as bad as revolutions. On the other hand it may persuade them to employ the arts of peace; and I, at any rate, will be regarded with considerable gratitude, and for my few remaining years of life will be allowed to work without the constant fear of molestation. We will go next week to Tamaulipas."

"Shall we have a camp," I asked, "like soldiers?"

"Yes, and soldiers to bring back the gold," said Don Arcadio. "The governor has promised me an escort if I give him a proportion of the gold. I have learned a lesson from that Spanish lady who was

bringing silver from the mountains many years ago and was afraid she would not reach the coast in safety. When the governor heard of this he offered her the shelter of his house, and she went in with all her mules. He comforted her very much and told her that her fears were altogether useless, and in the night he murdered her . . . But what I wish to talk about," said Don Arcadio, "is not the sad experience of this lady nor the expedition we are going to make, but rather to make sure that you appreciate the glories of geology. Since you and Don Eugenio have been with me it so has happened that we have devoted a good deal of time to liquid gold and other matters, which are not without a deep importance, but which may have caused you, my dear Juanito, to forget the fundamental facts which move me onwards. Geology, in short, is the greatest of all sciences, because it leads me to the greatest goal which any mortal man has ever struggled for. It teaches us of what this earth is made, and very soon I hope to know precisely—and if all the substances can be reduced to one, of course, my task will be much easier—and when I know precisely what is in the earth I shall have ascertained what lay in Noah's head. He, like all other men, was made of earth. And when I know what lay in Noah's head I shall have all the knowledge of which man is capable, and therefore all the happiness, and then I shall proceed to pour this happiness on our distracted country. But I have not brought you here," he said, "to talk of all these things."

I hoped that he would now dismiss me, for I wanted to search out old Captain Bartolmé, who was below this very roof.

"It has occurred to me," said Don Arcadio, "not

that you doubt the wisdom of my life's pursuit, but that you may not grasp it as completely as I would desire. And if you happened to be questioned by a band of sceptics you might be unable to allay their scepticism; they might laugh at both of us. And that is why I think it well to give you a short exposition of the Nature of Matter. I request you, Juanito, not to pay attention to those plausible philosophers who say that we are in a world of mere illusion and that nothing, neither you nor I nor Mexico, does really exist. However fascinating be that doctrine I am naturally up in arms against it, for it would destroy my work. The structure would come falling round my ears . . . As I have told you several times, true happiness springs out of knowledge and complete human happiness can be reached by knowing what the world is made of. Therefore, if it turns out to be made of nothing, of appearances, of things that in our blindness we believe we see, then it would follow that our human knowledge is no more than vanity, and that our happiness—no ! no ! ”

He started pacing up and down the room. “ My search for happiness, my search for happiness,” he muttered. And he glared at me and was a long time growing calm.

At last he stopped in front of me and said that he would tell me of some precious stones and what they signified to ancient folk. “ As I have mentioned,” said the Noahcite, “ all matter may be one, and therefore, to avoid the risk of wasting time, we will devote ourselves not to the composition of these stones but to their inherent qualities, and surely this is of extreme importance. Well, it was decided that the twelve stones of the New Jerusalem have each of them a meaning in accordance with their colour, and it is

remarkable how accurately all their attributes were known to experts such as Bonaventura and Richard of Megenberg. The former has divided the twelve stones in groups of four which represent the virtues of Christian perfection. For example, in the second group the emerald is hope for the forgiveness of sins, the sardonyx is hope for mercy and the sard is hope for eternal bliss. And the religious symbolism of the stones was not by any means fantastic, for it sprang from their medicinal and celebrated qualities. It is quite true that Albertus Magnus, who was a most enviable pantologist, that is to say, a person who embraced all knowledge, found himself obliged to argue with the people who expressed their doubts as to the healing power of stones. And then this wise man gives in utmost detail all the multitudinous powers which reside in them, while Richard of Megenberg deduces this power from the stone's symbolical meaning. Thus the green jasper, says he, which strengthens the body, stands for that belief which strengthens the soul. And with regard to the emerald, he informs us that it represents modesty and that it will break in two if a sin against love is committed in its presence, and thus it has the power to restrain such evil deeds. Albertus Magnus goes so far as to assert that it cannot bear the matrimonial intercourse of married people, since a King of Hungary possessed a stone which broke upon his finger while he was embracing the Queen. Yet I know nothing of Hungarian amours . . . But you, my son, are not without some knowledge now of one branch of geology."

With that he waved me to the door. And I ran quickly up to Don Eugenio's room.

He was engaged in talking to Maria, very earnestly,

and she was sitting on the floor and with her head against his knee. When I came in my master did not cease discoursing. "If, on the other hand," said he, "the Noahcite will not allow you to go with us on this expedition which to me is most repellant, but from which I cannot well excuse myself, then you will either wait here till such time as we return, if that indeed be God's desire, or you will go your way. If only there lay any value in my blessing, I would give it you, Maria, from the bottom of my heart. What can I do except to pray that you will fall into more worthy hands than mine? At least I saved you from the wild lieutenant."

She looked up at him most tenderly.

"In front of our young friend," said Don Eugenio, "we need not change the subject of the conversation. We began by talking about love, and Juanito may be grateful to us, in the days to come, when he first is troubled with a woman. Let him know that women, if they run away from you or if you conquer them, are always man's great enemy."

"But, señor," said Maria, "why do you say that?"

"Dear girl, I trust that you will never know one half the damage you will do to men. It may be answered that the men who seize or who attempt to seize you are pernicious fellows anyhow, but if they are not punished for this crime I should reject that part of Holy Scripture which relates the punishment of Judas Iscariot and for a sin which he was fated to commit. Some people are less fortunate than others, that is all. And you, my children, must at any rate not fall into the sin of thinking that our Maker is unjust or cruel."

"Oh, no, no," she said most gravely, "and let Him

not be cruel, Don Eugenio, to you for having seized me."

Then there came into my master's face a look of grand nobility. "Indeed," quoth he, "there is no greater culprit in this land."

Maria flung herself against him and she pressed her fingers on his lips. "Oh, do not speak like that!" she cried. "You are not wicked and you did not seize me. It is I who came to dwell with you. And God knows that, of course."

Don Eugenio smiled and gently took her hands away. "He also knows," said he, "that my one consolation is the thought that from the greatest sinners come the greatest saints; repentance is the frame of mind which God prefers in us because the Devil hates it most. And by the way," said Don Eugenio, "I should like to tell you of Saint Mary the Egyptian, who is the patron saint of all those who repent. Her example we can keep before us; but even if we have the courage and the opportunity to wander, as she did, for so many years in the desert, I am doubtful as to whether our transgressions would be so completely washed away that another Zozimus, of eminent virtue, would approach us and would humbly ask our blessing. Also I am doubtful whether, in this different age of ours, we should not have to tread the wilderness for more than Mary's seven and forty years and still not meet a man as perspicacious and benevolent as Zozimus. How many persons nowadays would give their mantle to a miserable penitent whose body has become entirely black, whose hair falls to the shoulders and is white as wool, whose garment is the robe of innocence? Alas, it is an age of lesser sinners and of lesser saints. As the saying goes, it is the lesser saints who will be the ruin of God;

and I fear He looks askance upon the lesser sinners. But if we live in narrow circumstances we must still continue, we must try to leave our little garden better than when we received it, we must not spend all our time in thinking of old, mediæval, spacious gardens which have disappeared for ever."

Don Eugenio had spoken the last sentence with solemnity, and now he sat there sunk in thought, until Maria, speaking not a word, put down her head and kissed his hand.

"Ah well," said Don Eugenio, "this thinking about love has made us melancholy. And although I said that love is perilous to women and more perilous to men, the greatest danger is to stop and spend our time in thinking of it. I believe that it is better for a man to do evil boldly than to think of evil, better to live than to think about life and better to snatch at love with both his hands than merely to dream of it. . . . Now," said he to Maria, "I do not want you to look sad."

"But when you are not here to talk to me, when I go back into my village and can understand what everybody says—dear God, I wish I could go with you."

"Well, well, and what news have you?" said Don Eugenio to me. "If it is bad, your patience, let me tell you, is quite contrary to precedent."

I told him that I had been learning from the Noachite about some precious stones, and that all men are made of earth and that he didn't want me to believe some plausible philosophers, and that that was all I could remember.

"Wait until I have him for a whole day riding by my side to Tamaulipas," said my master. "I will demonstrate to him how horribly he is in error when he says that men are made of earth. But now you

and I will go," said he, "to spend another happy day among our books. God knows what is in store for us."

We made our way into the room above the stable, where by this time my good master had collected a fair quantity of books and manuscripts belonging to the Noahcite. The larger part of them did not deal with geology, for they had been in Don Arcadio's possession from the days when he did not restrict himself to this one science. Yet as we were eating Don Arcadio's bread and salt, my master said it would be less than honourable if we spent a day without devoting part of it to Roger Bacon's treatise. And I recollect how on that morning we began methodically, Don Eugenio transcribing sentences in his large, lucid, somewhat ornamental hand, while every now and then he told me of a Latin word which was not yet in my vocabulary. So we came to the word *fumant*, "they are smoking," which was in a paragraph about volcanoes.

"*Et jam summa procul villarum culmina fumant*," said my master, "by which Virgil means that evening approaches. Oh, my son," said he, "if we were not about to undertake this dreadful journey we would read a book of that great poet. *Et jam summa*—and what smoke shall we find of an evening except the smoke of ravished villages? . . . Old Virgil, he was innocent and amiable and peaceful, rather like his writings, so that he attracted me, for I was so unlike him; I could always hear a tempest blowing round the corner, even when I had for years been in the bishop's library. I cannot help it, talking of the distant days, now that I am to be pulled up again where I had taken root, and this time I shall not survive it." As he said these words his voice was very valiant and his countenance was flushed.

Perhaps he saw how great my longing was to rise against these words and bury them and let them nevermore come out into the light.

"Ah well," said my beloved master, "there was something else in Virgil which I used to think was not unlike me, that is the desire to lead a contemplative life. It was a labour, sometimes a delightful labour, for him to write poetry; but he was never able to leave off, and so far I may say I have resembled him, since I have not been able to leave off from mixing with another sort of poetry which is the crowd of men. The idea to write a book has come to me, but I was always either too indolent or too busy. Well, I wonder what sort of book I would have written. . . . If only those men were to write who have a new philosophical theory of life, then even Virgil would have had to keep quiet."

At this moment we were interrupted by Faustino. We had not heard him coming up the stairs, since, in accordance with his usual habit, he was barefoot. Still we might have heard his breathing, which was very loud. And, though he had a face which never could show much expression, anyone could see that he was most intensely agitated. For example, his eyes, which I had never noticed, had the look of a poor dog which does not understand why it is being whipped. The corner of his bluish under-lip was quivering.

"But calm yourself," said Don Eugenio, "so far as I can help it no harm shall befall your master."

"The whole country is full of robbers!" cried Faustino. "We shall certainly be killed."

"Then I shall only take one pair of boots," said Don Eugenio.

Faustino blinked at him. "But—but," said he,

“and if the *jefe* of the region should arrest us he will make us build a road or—I ask your pardon, would you like to hear what happened to a friend of mine who was a very upright comrade and a good tailor? But I am not sure if you would like to hear of him.” Faustino’s agitation was now giving way to deep despondency.

My master wished to render him more cheerful. Therefore he assured him that he was most curious to hear about this friend of his.

“But, woe is me, I have forgotten what his name was,” said Faustino.

“Call him Juan or Tomás or whatever you like,” said my master.

“Thank you,” said Faustino, “but if I am false in that you would say I am false in the whole story.” He displayed as yet no sign of cheerfulness.

“Now listen to me, Faustino,” said my master, smiling at him in the most friendly fashion. “You can truly give him any name you like, whether it be a Spanish name or a Mexican or that of any other people under the sun—I promise you it will not interfere with my enjoyment of the story. Did you hear what happened to Gazielle, the French officer who was captured with all his men near San Pedro in the State of Sinaloa, about two years ago, and dragged into the town amid the wild, enthusiastic shouting of the population? Well, they say that in his papers there were found a dozen copies of a document which he was going to fasten up at the *casa municipal* and some other public buildings of San Pedro; in this document he gracefully acknowledged the enthusiasm which had greeted him on all sides as he rode in triumph through the town. . . . But the story would be just the same, to me at all

events, if I were to call the officer Dubois or Doucet or Gamelle. So I beg you to have no more scruples with the name of your friend the good tailor."

Faustino nodded and he slowly rubbed his chin. He looked like soldiers do, I should imagine, when they find they have been lured into an ambushade, that they are in a marsh and that their legs are sinking irretrievably. It seemed to poor Faustino that a million names, of all the ages and of all the countries, beautiful and ugly names and sacred names, were hanging all around him, ready to be plucked. He told me afterwards that it was like a forest with the fruits suspended from a thousand branches and across each of the fruits its name was written ; he did not know where to look, for he was so confused, and from a certain tree there hung a number of large yellow fruits and on them in black letters you could see the names of Satan, every fruit with one of his innumerable names ; for Satan, said Faustino, is in this respect alone like God, that he possesses many names, as anyone can hear who listens to a learned priest. Faustino had himself, he told me, had the great advantage at Jalapa of a Spanish priest whose eloquence was marvellous and whose terrific voice could make the devils in you run away. This priest was such a learned man that he had penetrated Satan's numerous disguises and he would attack him in his sermons now by this name, now by that ; thus with his beautiful and mighty eloquence he called down curses, very often, on Sammael and Beelzebub and Lucifer and Belial and Luzbel, on the Enemy, the Persecutor, on the Lord of Darkness, the Accuser, on the Tempter and the Contradictor, the Prevaricator, the Malicious One, the Rebel, on Agromanyus and Ahriman and Abaddon and Apollyon. Many of these names, Faustino said, were

written on the yellow fruit which hung before his eyes.

"Shall I begin your story?" said my master. "Shall we talk about the sad adventures of your friend the tailor who was apprehended by the *jefe*?"

"And he was in truth most skilful as a tailor," said Faustino.

"But the *jefe* had a grudge against him," said my master.

"Señor Don Eugenio," said the man, "you know the ways of magic, you have read the story which I have inside me. And you know the fate of my poor, miserable friend, how he was forced to help the builders of a road who were bad persons out of prison with a guard of other bad ones, who were soldiers, watching them. And he was made to labour at this work because the *jefe* of the place desired his woman."

"Your friend was not married?" asked Don Eugenio.

"It would not have saved him."

"Perhaps not on earth," said Don Eugenio. "Yet one must also think of heaven."

"But in heaven there will be no *jefes*," said Faustino. "As for this one, he desired the woman, and so furiously that he seized the poor Gregorio and made him build the road with all those other villains and unhappy men."

My master rose, walked over to Faustino and, in the most sympathetic way, he patted him upon the back. "It does you every honour," so he said, "that you should be afflicted by your friend's misfortunes. But before you came young Juanito and myself were having a discussion about Virgil, and, with all respect to your style of narration, which has merits of its own, I cannot help lamenting, for your sake, that it is not

more like Virgil's, since it then would have a greater chance of permanent survival, and for Juanito's sake, at all events, I will endeavour to examine how the Latin poet would have told it."

Don Eugenio cleared himself a little space upon the table, and was in the act of sitting down upon it when Faustino spoke.

"If your worship will pardon me," he said, "it is the truth which I have told you, and I think that not even a friend of your worship's can do more."

"You are an honest fellow," said my master. "And yet one can be sure of this, that if two men give their impressions of the same event their stories will not be the same, and in proportion as the couple are more honest so will their stories vary . . . I sometimes think," said Don Eugenio, "that one has far to search among created things in order to find differences more pronounced than those which frequently exist between two men. But, doubtless, you have noticed how it happens that a person tries to put his own eyes into someone else's head. It is absurd and it is tragic . . . We should be delighted that we are so different, and that what is the truth for you is not the truth for me."

"We are all different," said Faustino, in a kind of reverie. "What can be done? What is there to be done?"

"If you will follow my advice," said Don Eugenio, "you will do nothing. And although you are the cleverest man in all the world you will not make a rose be like a cactus."

"They are very different," said Faustino.

Then my master moistened both his lips and said that now he would go back to Virgil with the story.

“Your friend the tailor,” so he said, “would be a heroic person, driven from his home by the pernicious *jefe*, and the *jefe*, after having lived awhile with your friend’s woman, would be conscious that his mode of life could not endure for ever, and in deep despair he then would kill himself.”

Faustino rubbed his hands ; he was entirely pleased.

“And there would be a great deal more to tell,” said Don Eugenio. “The tailor, working at the road, would fall into a kind of sleep and would behold the gods, who made this country with such prodigality and splendour, come on snow-white horses down the road. Between them would be riding the heroic, pious tailor, who, with their assistance, would establish Mexico upon a sure foundation.”

“Oh, yes, yes !”—and then Faustino checked himself, his face fell. “But,” said he, “the man was only one of my own friends. How could he ride with God and do those other things ?”

“If God desires a thing it comes to pass,” said Don Eugenio. “And the more impossible it seems to you the purer will be your belief if you believe it. We have not been called on by the Church to put our faith in what we know, but in what we do not know, and surely the acme of faith is that which not only does not shrink from what it does not know, but extending much further than that, is ready to receive into its bosom the phenomena which intellect and reason and experience would unhesitatingly reject. So let us have the tailor riding down the road to set this country on a firm foundation.”

“May God live long : May He live long !” exclaimed Faustino.

“All the heroes of this country would come past,” said Don Eugenio, “and you would have a thrilling

story. I need scarcely say that it would fall far short of Homer, yet nevertheless even Virgil . . .”

But Faustino was quite satisfied. I never thought he could behave in such a fashion, for he was by nature very solemn, not to say depressed. He nearly danced out of the room, and, as he went, we heard him laughing with great, simple happiness and rendering thanks to God. But I believe he did not know as many names of God as of the Devil.

“We shall now be able to go on,” my master said. “Oh, do you realize what it will cost me to leave all these books?” He looked round very helplessly.

“But if we are not killed,” I said, “we can come back to them. The soldiers will not steal them, I am sure.”

“And if, indeed, we are killed—well, why should we drag our dearest fellow-travellers with us? No! no! no!” He tossed his head back and he looked most gallant.

Then I asked him if he knew why we should share the fate of that poor tailor, since there was no *jefe* who was hostile to us. Did it not, I asked, seem foolish of Faustino to hold up for us the story of a man whose life was so unlike our own.

“Maria is a very worthy girl,” my master said. “I hope with all my heart that she will not come into wicked hands.”

And then we worked for several hours in Don Eugenio’s peculiar way. He once had told me that the kisses of true love are turned to butterflies, and now as he went wandering from one book to another, fondling them and talking at random, he did really seem to be a large, benignant butterfly.

And when that day was over and the house was dark, I crept out of my room and made for Don

Eugenio's door. This would be one of my last love-nights with Maria.

He was snoring very regularly and I knocked, but there was no reply. Perhaps Maria was asleep herself. I knocked again, and then with every care I turned the handle of the door. I opened it just wide enough to let me in. There I could see her, sitting in the moonlight on her bed. She waved her hand, as if she wanted me to go away. The moonlight also fell upon the placid face of Don Eugenio. He was murmuring while he slept.

I stood there for a long time, making various motions with my arms and head, entreating her and ordering her and threatening her, but she was obstinate. She made it clear to me that she was filled with love for Don Eugenio. She bent over him as if she were his mother. When she looked at me she was imperious, commanding me to leave the room at once.

As I drew nearer to the bed her face became contorted and I looked away from her.

"In the name of God," she whispered, "take yourself away!"

Her voice was not much louder than the voice of Don Eugenio, but I could not hear what he said, at least I could not hear distinctly.

I went a step nearer to his smiling face and she glared round at me as if she were indeed a savage thing. And I could hear a word or two of what he said and then he made some incoherent sounds. It had no sense, but when she gazed at him there came into her rigid face the sweetness that there was in his.

And if at last he had not murmured Enriqueta's name, I think Maria never would have come with me.

CHAPTER XV

ON the second morning after this I was awakened by the noise of horses and of men ; the men were shouting and were knocking with their weapons on the doors. I did not stop to think of what might happen to me as I ran across and threw the window open. It was barely light enough to see what was this troop which filled the street and cursed and shouted, riding east and riding west in terrible confusion, some who flogged their horses, some who had dismounted. But I knew that this was part of the Imperial army, since the sound of foreign voices mingled with the others.

As they rattled on the doors and on the iron window-bars I was surprised that not a single one of the inhabitants appeared, and as for me, I thought it would perhaps be better if I partly closed the window. Then I knelt down on the floor in a position where they scarcely could have seen me, and I watched them with a rapt attention. They were quarrelling with one another, even firing at each other, and it looked as if it all would end in death. But gradually most of them moved on to other streets—there was a torch lit very near the house, I was afraid that some of them in vengeance would destroy us, but I found the torch was fixed upon a table of green cloth and several men were taking from a carriage the equipment for roulette. These carriages, with bankers and with croupiers, were accustomed to attach themselves to

armies of importance. And as soon as it was ready for them the calm players took their seats and certainly they made a favourable contrast with the frantic horsemen. As the play proceeded, a few horsemen rode back through the street and stopped their horses near the table, so that they could watch the players, and they seemed intensely interested.

Now and then a man who played would look up and address a horseman, but some others of the gamblers were so much absorbed that they did not turn round, they merely struck a blow at any horse who laid his mouth upon their shoulder. In fact, the scene was such a peaceful one that I was not afraid of anything ; I went down to the street. With some manœuvring I managed to get in between the horsemen and the players, and I stopped there for I do not know how long, but while the daylight made the torch grow pale and strange—they did not put it out—and by this time a crowd of the inhabitants had gathered round. One of the horsemen, who was French, perceived this and admonished them.

“ A hospitable folk ! ” he cried. “ We march for many leagues all through the night, we march along your execrable roads, we that have sacrificed ourselves in order to bring harmony to your distracted land—we do all this, and when we knock upon your doors you keep as quiet as the dead. Oh, gratitude and hospitality ! ”

“ What are they all but pigs ? ” said another Frenchman.

A very unsuccessful player, who was a Mexican colonel, asked these two to speak no more, as it disturbed his play. A Frenchman, who was sitting at his side, removed the colonel's fire-arm very dexterously.

"You Mexicans and Spaniards, you are all the same!" said the angry horseman. "You with your fine phrases! For example, 'Sir, my house and wife and children are at your entire disposal.' . . . Are you not ashamed to welcome honourable men with such deception and such lies? It is the same with everything. God, what are my transgressions that they brought me here?"

The colonel banged his fist on the green table and declared that this could not be borne. And various other players growled at him and at the Frenchman.

"My dear sir, allow me," said the colonel, with a tremor in his voice, "allow me to inform you that we have no leisure at this moment to attend to your transgressions. Stop your mouth, I pray you. And I have no doubt that we poor innocents of Mexico might learn a great deal from the lurid things you have committed."

Then a gaunt and weary-looking Austrian friar, who was in the midst of the spectators at the other side of the green table, lifted up his arm and solemnly called on the whole assemblage to restrain their passions.

"Amen, amen!" said the banker who presided. "You are officers and cavaliers, and let it not be said against you that you failed in the deportment which is customary round our table. I am sure," quoth he, "that I shall not appeal in vain to so illustrious a gathering."

But as he spoke it seemed as if his table might be overturned. The Frenchman of transgressions was endeavouring to make his horse go sideways towards the colonel, and his rough words were directed both at his opponent, at the sallow banker, at the priest, at his own friends who grasped the bridle of his horse and at the whole of Mexico, which was, he said, accursed.

Some other Mexicans and foreigners were growling at each other, but they did not come to blows.

The banker stood up in his place. "My gentlemen," said he, "let us remember always that we are the army of the Empire. We may not permit ourselves the license and the barbarism of the Liberals. I say that in us lies the great privilege of showing all the world that—that—in fine, we are not Liberal barbarians, by any means. My comrades of the cause! Let us conduct ourselves in such a way that Mexico may be exalted and that all the foreigners may venerate this land of heroes!"

"What an imbecile!" exclaimed the Frenchman, who was struggling still with his opponents.

"Señor," said the colonel, wheeling round, "I have to tell you that I perfectly agree with you. Indeed, you are a man with all five senses. But this imbecile, with his deafening bombardment of speech, should be a deputy."

Some of the people laughed, and the antagonism they had shown for one another was evaporating.

But the banker stood there with a look of quiet resolution. It was a considerable time before the noise of laughter and the shouts of approbation died away, because a certain number of the players and spectators made these noises for the purpose of restoring peace. At last the banker spoke again:

"My gentlemen," said he, "let us give our attention to roulette."

Then he sat down and took a handful of the coins which were by his side. As he allowed them to fall clattering, one by one, on to the pile he looked round at his customers most cheerfully. He asked a servant to put out the torch, and that was wise of him, since

it had given to the scene a kind of desperate appearance, and I daresay a good many people, if by chance they happen to look villainous, comport themselves like villains.

With the light extinguished they all settled down to solid play. And presently my friend, the sweetmeat-seller, came amongst us and announced what he brought with him. He was urgently invited by a Frenchman to go back in search of coffee, and the banker said that, on the contrary, he would himself provide what was appropriate. He nodded to his servant, who appeared to understand completely, and the play continued. In the interval, before the coffee and the other things arrived, some of the players took the opportunity of bowing to the banker, one of them got up and heartily embraced him. And a little later, as the cups were being handed round, the banker stood up once again and, holding out the palms of his delicate hands, said that it gave him a great pleasure to be in the midst of such a sympathetic gathering. The Imperial army, he was sure, would cause the chant of freedom to reverberate through the remotest territory of the Mexican dominion, it would give a fearful lesson to its despicable foes, who were devoid of shame.

“History,” he said—and he was obliged to speak loudly in order to be heard above the noise of drinkers and of eaters—“history has already consecrated her pages to you; she will record to posterity your valiant deeds. O warriors of this beloved country, you who do not shrink from sacrifices and from arduous toil, it is at your hands, flourishing the sword of liberty and justice, that the foeman will be gloriously cut in pieces and delivered to the vultures. I perceive that what I say has your esteemed approval.

Gentlemen, that is an honour which assuredly is great, my heart is throbbing—but all this I would relinquish utterly if I could bring a throb into the hearts of our immortal comrades who are dead. Surviving such misfortunes, we have consecrated and shall ever consecrate ourselves to peace and order. We it is who choke and strangle all dissension . . . Thank you, gentlemen of the triumphant and august Imperial army, thank you for receiving my remarks into your favour. When I am a deputy—and I may tell you that the patriotic Government has promised to confer this post upon me—then I shall inform the nation in the House of Congress of your brilliant merits. Also, if it is not situated in a territory which is too remote, I shall proceed in person to the place of which I am the deputy and there I shall discourse of you.”

There was a great clapping and waving of hands. But the Mexican colonel had lost so much money that he was impatient for the game to start. “Once we are upon the road,” he pointed out, “we shall not have a chance of playing. Gentlemen,” said he, addressing his French colleagues, “you must not judge Mexico from what it is at this unhappy moment when there is no time for comfort and when, to some extent, our civilization has been destroyed.”

He raised his cup, and, while he held it to his lips, the sallow banker seized his opportunity of making a few more remarks. “*Ay de mi, ay ! ay !*” he cried, so that everybody’s gaze was on him. “Circumstances have been such,” said he, “that Mexico is slightly overclouded, but, as I was saying, we are mindful of our sacred obligations. We will never let the broad fields of Otumba nor the fields of La Ventilla have upon them the disgraceful boot of an oppressor.

We, I say, will never sheathe the sword. And we . . .”

“What I was going to say,” burst in the colonel, “is that in the famous days it was our custom to live as a man should live, which is at leisure. Now we have to hasten through the land with the rebellious pigs in front of us or else behind us. Ah, the famous days! We used to call a halt and, underneath the shadow of some tree, without dismounting from our horses, we played monte. Gentlemen, I must apologise that all these famous days have gone . . . Now it is very seldom that we have a moment for the good amenities of life. To be a soldier in this country is a great, an almost unendurable fatigue. We have so much to do . . . But let the game begin.”

He asked a person sitting opposite to lend him money and he planted a good deal of it upon the table.

While he did this and while other players were preparing to resume, the banker cleared his throat and, looking towards the distant range of mountains, he spoke rather rapidly, as if it were a speech that he had learned by heart; but everyone was occupied, in one way or another, so that he was scarcely listened to.

“An unendurable fatigue,” he said. “Across Chihuahua’s windy desert and across the swamps and jungles. Such it is to be a soldier. . . . Gentlemen, it is to be prepared for everything, it is to stand behind a tree in all the pain of hunger, till the foe comes by whom you must kill . . . it is to barricade oneself upon a roof and stay there though the sun descends in all his fury . . . it is to ride through every sort of country, to be jerked upon a blind horse or to have no horse, and then to spend the freezing night upon a rock, to make in one day two days’

marches and perhaps retreat to-morrow—ordered here and ordered there—and in one village there are roses round his neck and in another village it is death that waits for him and bitter death, without a priest . . . dying on his blanket with a Liberal bullet in him . . . after all his faithfulness and beautiful ideals he obtains the wretched death of Liberals, and he may find himself not separated from the Liberals in the life to come. That is the reward of his long nights when he was frozen and of his wounds that would not heal and of the vigilance and of the loyalty and of the hope he never lost . . . Who is that priest ? ” he said. “ At all events this is no evil city. They have not chased out the priests.”

The gambling had begun, but several persons looked in the direction of this priest, who was no priest at all, but Don Eugenio. And he was walking up the hill as fast as possible.

“ He is not dressed as if he were a priest,” the banker said, “ and the blood also which oozes from his forehead is unsuitable. But I am sure of him.”

If I could only have got through the circle I would have run down to my good master, but I had to stay. And in these minutes of my anguish all the crowd was swept with joy, because the colonel had such luck as I had never seen before. His pile of money grew just like the white flowers leaping from a fairy’s garden ; everyone was pleased, for he had been so out of fortune.

And when my master was quite near the crowd he raised his voice and told them to beware. He said it twice, with such a fearful note of warning that I was astonished they did not all stare at him, and that a number of them had the boldness to continue with their play.

"But I told you that he is a priest," explained the banker. "Cavaliers and gentlemen, my gallant comrades . . ."

"There!" cried one of those on horseback, in a tone of horror.

It was a small body of the Liberal troops and they were galloping along, down at the bottom of the street, and they were swinging their lassoes and now they started simultaneously to howl.

I was thrown this way, that way, by the plunging horsemen and the gamblers—if the croupiers had not flung themselves upon the table it would certainly have been upset—the soldiers and the crowd were in a piteous confusion—and another body of the Liberal troops was bearing down upon us from the opposite direction. Several of the Frenchmen spurred their horses up a side-street, and the other horsemen tried to follow them, but were impeded by the flying crowd. I could not find my master anywhere, and then the Liberals, dressed in white, with lances and with muskets, were all round us, screaming that we must hold up our hands.

However, there was just time for the colonel to give back the money which the person sitting opposite had lent him. And that person glared with hatred and with admiration of the colonel's shrewdness.

No one else was glaring but the Austrian priest—he glared at them and muttered and continuously crossed himself. As for the croupiers and the white-eyed gamblers and the palpitating horseman and the others, they were holding up their hands submissively, without one hostile look among them. Evidently they were anxious that the Liberals should not be provoked to shooting. Then I tried to see what had become of that first mounted Frenchman who had so

deplored his being in our country, but I searched for him in vain and also for the banker. Someone seized me by the arm and pulled me out from all those people who were waiting to be searched. And I was pushed between the Liberal horses and against the neck of one of them on which a woman sat. She told me not to be afraid, she would not hurt me. Saying that, she patted me upon the head and gave me a long piece of sugar-cane, which was for me and for the horse. I never had seen any woman look so warlike, though there was a smile on her keen face and though her dusty hair was hanging down between her shoulders. I could not help staring at her, and she told me that she was the lady of an officer and that she liked me and that I could go with them—they were just in the middle of a grand, victorious campaign, she said. "And we will turn you into a good warrior," she announced. "Oh, you can go on sucking at the sugar-cane . . . But, let me tell you, I am really not a flower which comes in every hundred years, one of those rare ones."

I wanted to turn round to see the business that was going on, but this extraordinary woman dominated me.

"So, will you come with us?" she said. "You never will regret it, and the captain's wife will welcome you—she is behind us, for a woman who is following on foot—the woman of an ordinary soldier—stopped to have a child beside the road. Now run away and think it over. We shall ride out of this town to-night, when those who are on foot have overtaken us and had a little rest. Oh, it's the only life to lead, I tell you. God and Liberty!"

When I had gone a little way she shouted after me that if I was no fool I would not let the chance go by of

being in the conqueror's army. "Don Benito!" she exclaimed. "That Don Benito Juarez may live long!"

"Juarez! Don Benito! God and Liberty! Down with the Church! Death to the foreigners!" they shouted.

And they certainly had conquered this Imperial army with great ease. It was the first affray of any kind which I had witnessed, and I was exceedingly perplexed. Meanwhile my feet were taking me to Don Arcadio's house and there I heard the quiet voice of my dear master. He was at the stable.

When I reached him he was telling someone why democracy was this or that. He spoke with wisdom and with humour and with eloquence and sadness—but the man to whom he spoke was in the little dark room underneath the stairs and, from his voice when he was interrupting, I was sure that this must be the very Frenchman who had been so agitated and so angry to be here in Mexico. But now he was not angry. Don Eugenio had clearly put him in good temper, or perhaps he was relieved to know that he could stay inside the little room until the Liberals had ridden off. His horse, I saw, was in the stable; but the bridle and the saddle he apparently had taken with him into the dark room.

And so my master, with his bleeding forehead and his clothes in great disorder, was serenely occupied in laying down his views about democracy. He certainly would have been just as willing to discuss whatever subject, be it transient or eternal, which the unseen Frenchman might have raised. He would have been as interested and as courteous and as diffident. It was his diffidence which now particularly struck me, for the Frenchman as compared with

him was nothing, was a creature, as our phrase is, with his tail cut off.

And when the Frenchman, who now seemed to be quite happy in the darkness, undertook to show with no more than the personal experience of a friend of his, a French lieutenant, that there was too much democracy in Mexico, my master listened with the greatest patience. I was making signs to him that he should come away and stop his wound from bleeding, but he shook his head.

There had been a young French lieutenant who was quartered in the town of Orizaba, where he grew acquainted with a family of high position. In this family were two young daughters, and with one of them the Frenchman fell in love. The parents and the girl encouraged him; he asked his colonel for permission and the French Ambassador as well—these two enquired about the family and were extremely satisfied, so that the young lieutenant thought it was as good as settled. He was readily accepted by the girl, her parents acquiesced, and this was followed instantly by the withdrawal of the usual flock of youths who had been fluttering round her. The lieutenant begged that there should be no great delay. Again the parents acquiesced; they said the wedding of the girl and of her sister could be celebrated simultaneously. Till then the Frenchman had not known that there was any question of the marriage of the other girl, but he was told that this, unlike her sister's wedding, was most urgent, and the family seemed to regard her future husband with respectful admiration. He turned out to be the young lieutenant's soldier-servant.

My good master said that after all it was advisable to bring this conversation to a close, until there was

no longer any fear of being overheard by someone in the Liberal ranks. At any moment one or more of them might make their way into the stable-yard. And so he took his leave of him, and Don Eugenio told me that we need not yet inform the other people of the house. He fetched a bowl of water and then we went back into our own room. And while he was bathing his poor forehead he explained to me what he had learned about the Liberal plans. They would not sack the town, because they had some business elsewhere, and they think, said Don Eugenio, that this town and all the State of Veracruz will soon come into their possession.

It was most extraordinary how he could have ascertained so much in that short time. I asked him if he had related it to our French officer, but he replied that he believed the Frenchman would have left the country long before the Liberal plans were carried to success.

My master dipped a corner of his coat into the water and then held it to his head. "What I should like to know," quoth he, "is why I should imagine that the Liberals will do nothing, after their complete success which we have seen to-day."

Then I repeated to my master what the warlike woman of the sugar-cane had told me, that the Liberal troops were in the middle of a grand, victorious campaign.

"Ah, there you see," said Don Eugenio, "how much they fail in discipline. A military secret should be kept beyond all others."

"She was very kind to me," I added, "and she asked me to go with them. But, of course, I will not leave you."

He had plunged his head into the ruddy water,

and, as he looked up at me, it was as if his glittering smile had spread until it reached his forehead.

"Did I not tell you, my friend Juanito," said he, "that the Liberals would lose? . . . But now," said he, becoming serious, "now that my wound is better you shall hear how it was given me. However, I must warn you that the tale is rather long and of a semi-edifying nature, so that if you would prefer to go into the street and watch the various proceedings there, we will postpone the tale."

I begged him to begin.

"Well, in the first place," said my master, "he who threw the thing at me was our lieutenant, Esteban Fuentes."

"But he is on our side! He is not a Liberal!" I cried.

"The missile hit me just as hard," my master said. "No doubt if a dispute does not go further than fierce words, the missiles of a friend are those which hurt the most. But when it comes to a large paper-weight of Puebla onyx, as it did in this case, then the mental damage is of relatively small importance . . . Now, my son, you have been living with me for some time and, even if I have not spoken of them, you may know quite well what my opinions are on many matters. You may know, for instance, that I do not think it is advisable to warn the young of certain conduct, since they might then be deterred from learning by their personal experience, which is the only satisfying way."

"But if," I interrupted, "if a young man kills a Liberal or someone else?"

"I am thinking," Don Eugenio said, "of moral conduct, but before now it has happened that by simply putting somebody to death a man has risen, by

repentance, to a height which he would not have scaled. We used to have at Zaragoza, in his lordship's library, a fat and lovable small volume bound in red morocco by Derouse and decorated with the beautiful, broad dentelle border which is so characteristic of this master, who also lined it with a very delicate slate-blue silk. In that delightful book I found a good example of a sinner who, by timely penitence, becomes a saint. She was Eudoxia of Heliopolis, one of the fairest and most witty women of her day. She was a courtesan who had amassed a fabulous amount of gold. And no one would have claimed for her that she was on the path of righteousness. It also is quite possible that if she had been no great sinner she would not have suddenly set out upon this path when she had overheard a dialogue about the fearful and eternal tortures that such people as herself would certainly inherit. She besought a certain priest to tell her everything about religious matters, and a week had not gone by before she was so well-imbued with them that in a vision she beheld a place which was reserved for her among the blessed ones of God. After she was baptized she retired into a house of prayer; but those who once had loved the sinner felt exasperated with the penitent. Among them was a youthful libertine who swore he would abduct her, and he came in the disguise of a pious man. She penetrated the disguise and he fell dead in front of her, but then she interceded, so that he was brought to life again. And she did many other miracles and beneficial works, whereat the governor of the province, fearing lest she might stir up the people whose affection she had gained by these good works, commanded that her head should be cut off. . . . So there you have," said Don Eugenio, "a sinner who repented

and became a saint. And if you want one who committed murder I can tell you of Saint Ivan of the Balkans, who was a poor shepherd walking in the mountains when he met a Turk and slew him. Nothing else is known about this Balkan saint, so that his only merit may have been the murder. Naturally I can understand those people who are not in sympathy with this Saint Ivan, but at any rate he was a man of good intentions."

"Perhaps," said I, "the Turk blasphemed against the Holy Church."

"And yet," said Don Eugenio, "I am myself not overfond of those who carry out their good intentions. If these people were more numerous the world would be a camping-ground of prigs and other horrors. . . . Well, if those who were beside Eudoxia in her childhood had so dinned into her ears that one should not become a courtesan, and if the friends of the young Ivan had effectively impressed upon him that one should not murder, then these two would not have gone the way which ultimately brought them into great positions. I do not propose to warn you against women; you will yield to your desires, Juanito, and the time will come when you will be repenting just as bitterly as I am doing at this moment. I know very well that many masters do not speak of such things to their pupils, but in my opinion I am not more wrong than is the nightingale which loves to sing when all the other birds are silent."

I entreated him to tell me how Don Esteban Fuentes threw the piece of Puebla onyx.

"As I stood outside his house," said Don Eugenio, "and it was dark and very cold and there was falling this abominable rain of mist, the *chipi-chipi*, I assure you that if I had not remembered some of the great,

famous lovers who had not been daunted by the obstacles I should have gone straight back to bed. Oh, triumph of intelligence ! Oh, victory of the spiritual within us over what is bestial ! And to have the knowledge that these ancient heroes did not live in vain and that with their assistance we can rise above the sordidness of our surroundings ! Juanito, when the night was freezing me and when the rainy mist was all about me, I could let my thoughts be occupied with the romantic passion of Count Claros de Mont-alban for Claraniña, the Emperor's daughter, and the grievous obstacles he had to face ; I could be thinking of Cristóvam Falcão, the old poet who was very faithful to his wife, although her parents caused him to be shut up five years in a prison ; lastly, I could dream of the adventures of Theagenes and Chariclea, so that my unhappy physical environment became as nothing and was swallowed by the grandeur of my love for Enriqueta. Such high thoughts are possible, my son, to all of us who happen to be placed in such conditions and if you have perseverance then there could be no defeat for you, but if your perseverance is inadequate I would advise you not to dream of ancient lovers, just as one advises seamen not to learn to swim and thus prolong their agony.

"Well, I was brooding with a full heart on Theagenes and Chariclea when the window of the house was opened and I saw the young lieutenant. He leaned out into the night, although it was so disagreeable, and he removed the night-cap from his head. He muttered a few bars of the Paloma song.

"I made my presence known to him, and instantly he burst into a fierce invective. He employed against me and against the Spanish people and against my

former colleagues the librarians a villainous array of words, with most of which I was acquainted. It is written in the story of Theagenes that 'The barbarians are by nature hard to turn from their impulses'; and therefore I considered that it would be best to make no answer. Let him with his raving speech exhaust himself, and let me in the meantime go back to Theagenes and Chariclea. Has not Heliodorus beautifully told the incident when they were captured by the bandits? I could see the robber-captain put his hand upon the girl and bid her rise and follow him. She guessed his meaning, and she tried to draw the youth along with her and, putting the sword to her breast, she threatened to kill herself unless they took both of them. The captain, understanding partly what she said, and more by signs, and thinking that the lad would make an excellent recruit if he got well, dismounted, and made his squire do the same. He then placed the prisoners on the horses, instructed the other men to follow when they had packed up the plunder, and himself kept up with the horses on foot, holding up also the girl or the youth if either of them was slipping off. This incident meant something, for the captain seemed to be a servant and the captor was choosing to wait upon his captives. To such a degree, says Heliodorus, can dignity and beauty master even a robber and govern the roughest of men!

"While I was considering this, Don Esteban Fuentes grew more violent. It is extraordinary that he did not wake up all the neighbours. I reflected that if happily I could discuss the situation with him in a calm and reasonable manner I was not without some arguments in my defence that would appeal to him and that would cause us very possibly to separate as friends. I therefore settled to wait there in

patience till that moment should arrive. It would be so much better than to have him in the morning stride with unabated fury through Jalapa and shout everywhere a most malicious and exaggerated and most odious account of this my indiscretion. Thus I let my thoughts go back to Heliodorus, the romantic bishop, and of what he said concerning dignity and beauty which can master even robbers and can govern a rough man.

"I saw the noble Chariclea in her great distress, when they had travelled to the swamp, and she was flung into a hut to spend the night; I heard how she addressed Apollo, saying that he punishes our sins too hardly. 'What we have gone through,' she said, 'is not sufficient for thy vengeance,—that we have lost our friends, that we have been taken by pirates, in danger at sea a thousand times, taken again by robbers on land,—but what we have to expect is worse than the past. Where wilt thou stay all this? If thou wilt end it with an honourable death, it is well; but if anyone is to take from me more than I have yet granted, even to Theagenes, I will forestall the outrage by hanging myself, and so I will preserve myself pure even to death, and I will take with me my chastity as a splendid winding-sheet.'

"'Thou—thou—thou—devastator of my house,' roared the lieutenant. 'It is well for thee that I have not a musket in this room—thou most—thou most . . .'

"After all, I meditated, we do not possess within us an unlimited supply of phrases and a golden phrase belongs to all the world, so that it would be foolish to find fault with Heliodorus for employing that one of the chastity which is a splendid winding-sheet, a phrase which had been used by Dionysius the Elder,

tyrant of Syracuse, and revived by Theodora, the consort of Justinian the First.

“At that moment Esteban Fuentes actually said that I was the most dangerous of men and that no girl was safe from me. Alas! he made me think of long ago, when I was different. I was not incommoded then by this majestic body, I was graceful and as slender as the Indians who now regard me with the eyes of admiration as I slowly move along the streets—just as they regard a man whose chin they cannot see behind his beard. There was a time when I was able to ignore the years—a floating bird, another bird, far overhead—and now they are a pack of vultures who are watching me, the shadow of their wings oppresses me. But I am talking in a fashion which does not go well with my majestic and prosaic body . . . I felt that it was cruel of the young lieutenant to remind me of those days—an old man, doubtless, should be grateful that he is not older—and if I had possessed the strength of will I would have answered him. I was so miserable with the thought of my old age and my infirmities that I could not prevent myself from weeping. I was weeping for the dear delights which would return no more.

“‘Ah!’ cried the young lieutenant, ‘you perceive the error of your ways and you repent.’

“I only wanted to be left alone with my sad thoughts and in the general misery of the night. The rain of mist was like a brother to my tears, and in the blackness and the cold about me I could hide myself and not be noticed.

“‘So it is I,’ said the insufferable lieutenant, ‘who have brought you to repentance.’ He seemed rather sorry for me.

“But I could not tolerate him any longer. I would

not give way to mere abuse, as he had done, but I would speak to him with dignity. What I proposed to do was to remind him that, above such miserable creatures as himself and me, there was the everlasting word of God. A little time before, when I was conscious only of Don Esteban Fuentes and myself, I managed, with the help of those old famous lovers, to retain my dignity and my composure ; now when I was conscious also of Almighty God—what could I do ?

“Don Esteban invited me to come this evening to a farewell feast, and I accepted, Juanito, for myself and you, and let us take the poor French officer.”

“I am very glad,” said I, “that you forgave Don Esteban Fuentes.”

“Some of the invectives he assailed me with was picturesque,” said Don Eugenio.

CHAPTER XVI

BUT our Frenchman was unable to go with us to the feast. That afternoon the warlike lady of a Liberal officer—we never knew which of the officers it was—came marching into Don Arcadio's house to tell me that I could go with them, as she had suggested. If I followed her advice, she said, I would not hesitate. And she remarked in her deep voice that I ought to be flattered at the way in which she had remembered me, but she was one of the most steadfast women of the land, she said. I was to think it over carefully while she walked round the house. When she came back she had the Frenchman with her. He was carrying his horse's bridle and the saddle, and he seemed in a great hurry to be gone. So did the woman. At the same time, said the officer, he would not care to go without returning thanks to Don Eugenio and also to the owner of the house, whom he had not yet seen. And could I find these gentlemen and could I find some food and could I run about the town in order to be sure that every Liberal had departed? Then they told me that they were in a tremendous hurry, and I fetched my master, Don Arcadio, Faustino and Maria and old Captain Bartolmé. And I was so much interested that I did not go into the town, but stayed to listen. I suppose that as these two, the warlike woman and the Frenchman, passed so rapidly and so completely from us and became the phantoms of two people who had been

beside us for a day, I ought not to write much about them, though my master used to say that, whatever might occur in the hereafter, we were all of us of equal unimportance in this world of phantoms.

Till the moment when they met, the officer had been resolved to sail from Veracruz on any vessel he could catch ; I do not know precisely what had been the woman's resolutions. But they were determined now, they told us, to betake themselves to an estate belonging to the woman, where a factory could be erected near the waterfall, and thus a fortune could quite easily be made.

I was astonished that she had divulged all this and that the factory had been arranged so quickly.

"It will be a profitable thing," the Frenchman said.

"And patriotic also," said the woman. "If we had more factories in Mexico there would be far less idleness and poverty and discontent and revolution."

"We shall have a huge success," the Frenchman said. "At present one is under the necessity of drawing calico and cloth and wool and many iron goods from Europe, while the powder and the bullets that you make are miserably bad as well as dear. It is for us to make both these commodities, the powder and the bullets, satisfactorily."

They told us more about their schemes and someone said that if all Mexican antagonists would imitate them and go into partnership, there soon would be no country half as peaceful.

But the Frenchman waved his forefinger from side to side and, with a very knowing smile, he said they would have customers enough for powder and for bullets.

And the woman said her husband would be pleased when he came back to his estate—for it was his—and found that there was so much money for him.

And Faustino muttered to himself that this was a far better and more usual and less risky way of getting gold than to go down for it into the State of Tamaulipas.

When the couple rode away I followed them, in dread lest anything should happen, but I think the people of the town believed the woman had been looted by the Frenchman and they merely shrugged their shoulders at his curious taste and said that foreigners were very strange.

But as for me, I thought old Captain Bartolmé was stranger still, because when Don Eugenio and myself, that evening, were going to the feast, he said that he would likewise go. He said that, at the risk of being murdered, he must see his old friend Enriqueta once again. Now we were all upon the point of separation—God knew what He had in store for us. And so he came, while Don Arcadio and Faustino and Maria stopped at home.

My master walked between us, and his observations were of notable lucidity :

“We are going to a farewell feast,” he said, “because our patron wishes to go on a journey in pursuit of gold. I think it is quite probable that he will find some gold, since he already has abundance of it. But from what I know of him he will forget to share the spoil with us ; if I request a small amount, so that I shall not be completely destitute in the few years which I may live, he probably will make me drink ten fortunes in a soup, so that I may have everlasting life. The madness of our patron and his blasphemy are terrible afflictions, but the qualities

which make me look upon this expedition with foreboding are his beautiful detachment and his exaltation. I have come into a time of life when the material things are of importance, and, so far as I can see, the best that I can hope for from this journey is that I will add to my experience, which is already more than ample. I know very well how grand I should appear if I could face the grievous prospect with a smile, as, under other circumstances, did the early Christian martyrs. But I am doubtful whether it is in me to hold out until the time for starting. And I feel that now the moment has arrived when I must overeat and overdrink myself, which is assuredly permitted if your purpose is a noble and a philosophic one. In this way I shall suffocate the growing weakness that I have within me. I shall make myself insensible. And even when my body would revolt I shall continue, if the physical and if the moral pain is great I shall continue, so that it may quite obliterate my mind and all its fears."

Old Captain Bartolmé was looking sad and happy at the same time, but far happier than I had seen him look of late. "Ah yes," said he, "I have not yet forgotten the good food and drink with which the father of this Juanito entertained me. I have eaten them in memory—the well-fried chickens and the chocolate with goat's milk and the small white pyramids of grease and the delicious cakes of honey and the ducks—those poultry-men who walk about Jalapa and exclaim: 'Ducks, oh my soul, hot ducks!' I swear they never knew how I regarded those of Father Pedro. Have you heard, señor my comrade, what the feast will be to-night? I am a storm-tossed vessel . . ."

"So am I," said Don Eugenio. "But are you going with us into Tamaulipas?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "I am ignorant," he said, "of what will happen to me."

"You are to be envied," said my master.

So they went on talking of what they would do that night and afterwards, but not with one word did they mention Enriqueta. And my heart went out to both of them, and if I could have had my way they would have each received an Enriqueta and a better one than she was. I saluted all the people in the street because I felt so friendly towards them, and though several of them called me names and others crossed themselves, for thinking I was mad—what did I care?

And on the bench outside the house there was Don Esteban Fuentes sitting in his uniform and with his legs stretched out.

"*Holà!*" he cried, "a welcome to you! I am horribly fatigued, for I have ridden over all the town and to the outskirts in a hunt for Liberals, that abominable, evil-smelling crowd. But we have swept them all away. And now we shall be merry." The lieutenant yawned.

"Sir," said my master, as he made a beautiful, old-fashioned bow, "we have resolved to put aside our sorrows and to let your table be a scene of mirth. I only hope our sorrows and our apprehensions, which are great, will not come to the surface. Is it your desire that we should now go in?"

Don Esteban Fuentes stretched himself again and rose. He seemed to be amused, and to my master and old Captain Bartolmé he said that neither of them need have apprehensions, for he was a cavalier and would not poison any guest of his, not even if the guest had previously wanted to deprive him of his mistress.

"I am not aware," he said to Don Eugenio, "what

is the code in Spain, according to which I presume you conduct yourself in these matters. But in Mexico a person of position either kills his man at once or kills the mistress and the man. If he does neither it is not considered very chivalrous that he should keep his vengeance for another time. Moreover, as my colonel always says, if anybody of position kills the man or kills the mistress he is acting contrary to law, which is a bad example to the lower people."

Then he pushed against the door and we all followed him into the house, into a little room which had a mirror and some rocking-chairs, and it was lighted by two candles that were placed in brackets on the mirror. The lieutenant blew them out and begged us to go forward to the next room and I think we all were glad that there was not much furniture, because the room was really dark. But in the next one we perceived a lighted table with some dishes down the middle of it and an Indian woman gazing at them. The lieutenant ordered her to go and bring down Enriqueta.

He was taking off his sword when she came in and so he did not notice properly the solemn look she had. And in a tone of heartiness he bade us all to take our seats. The Indian woman waddled back with some *tortillas*, very hot and round and crisp. She made a little heap of them beside our host, and he proceeded to give everybody one by simply throwing them all round the table. He did not appear to aim, but notwithstanding a *tortilla* fell just at the left of each of us.

"Aha," said Don Eugenio, "if you can plant the bullets in a person with such accuracy, then the Liberals who have gone may all congratulate themselves."

"May the Devil catch them!" the lieutenant said.

"I drink to their confusion!" And he raised his glass. He looked so fierce that all of us, excepting Don Eugenio, were anxious. Enriqueta, who was sitting at his left side—Don Eugenio was at his right and I was next to Don Eugenio and Captain Bartolmé was next to Enriqueta—she leant forward and besought him with her eyes to calm himself.

My master was transferring from his plate to mine a piece of chicken; I have never seen his hand more steady.

"Drink, now drink to their death!" cried our host. "That they may come to years of confusion! And I mean what I say!"

"And that is why we are not drinking," Don Eugenio said. "We are too sorry for them. When that other celebrated warrior, Julius Cæsar, changed the calendar the first year had the name of 'year of confusion.' It was four hundred and forty-five days in length; and can you really find it in your heart to wish the poor folk such a lengthened life?"

"Oh, what does he mean?" groaned the lieutenant.

Captain Bartolmé was sipping from his glass.

"In such an admirable wine as this," declared my master, "I submit that we should not drink evil things to anyone. I never saw a wine of such a colour and in such long bottles." Then he drank a little and he nodded gravely. "Sir," he said, "it is a most historic wine. I will confess that I did not ascribe to you such perspicuity. How did you come to buy it?"

"But I never bought it."

"Then we have to thank a noble ancestor of yours. What foresight!—to go sailing to the West with a few hundred glorious bottles."

The lieutenant lay back in his chair and looked

as if he would explode. "Oh, what a man!" he cried. "Oh, what a man!"

"Yes," Don Eugenio said enthusiastically. "He was the magnificent conquistador. I can imagine how he paced the deck with Ponce de Leon, who was seeking for the fount of everlasting youth, and your great ancestor was bringing a supply of it in thin, green bottles. That is greatness!"

"Oh, stop, stop!" cried the lieutenant. "'Tis too much."

"Not half enough, sir," said my master. "Such a man deserves the title. And I tell you that if only it is granted me to come back safely to this town, I shall devote myself to writing the biography of your unknown, far-seeing ancestor. To think that in the bishop's library at Zaragoza I was spending all those years in writing Saint Eugracia's life! And if I had accomplished it, what use would it have been as an example to the pious? Nobody who says he is a Christian runs the slightest risk of being fastened to a horse's tail or having iron bars put through his thighs or having his liver torn out. In fact, I am sorry to say that it is the enemies—the honest, open enemies—of Christendom who stand in gravest peril of these things . . . But as for the unequalled foresight of your . . ."

"Look now," said the lieutenant, banging with his hand upon the table, "it is I who had the foresight. When this wine was being taken up towards the capital, we lay in wait and seized a cart or two, and I obtained my proper share. What is the good of having Emperors who are extravagant and get their wine sent all the way from Hungary, unless one can participate? . . . And you, my dear sir, have been very much in error."

Don Eugenio was taking a luxurious, long draught of it and with his eyes shut. He drank very slowly. And when he put down the glass his eyes were like those of our famous Indian, Cuauhtémoc, when Cortés burned his feet, for they were proud and melancholy.

"I have met some people in my wanderings," he said, "who ostentatiously proclaimed it to the world that they had never stolen anything; and if, indeed, they spoke the truth they were unnatural, for men are thieves, and those who keep themselves from stealing fall in consequence into another sin. Let us, for example, take the very common theft, that of a woman. Do not the red lips of Enriqueta and her irresponsible gay laugh, her fruit-like shoulders, and the lovely curves of her body—not to mention other things—make her an object of desire?"

"I am not laughing," Enriqueta said.

"Which adds a grief to our desire and strengthens it," said Don Eugenio. "But is there anyone," he said, as he turned back his face to the lieutenant, "is there anyone who, contemplating such a woman, can refrain from having a desire within him? It is not worth while reflecting on those people who are quite or nearly quite indifferent to the desire, but I suspect those men who actively are up in arms against it. Such a sentiment of virtue does not live in ordinary men, but in those others who have lost their health and hope or who were never granted them by God. Whatever virtue of this kind I may possess I certainly have not acquired through studying the precepts of religion or through listening to the admonitions of the moralisers, who, in Spain, are beautifully eloquent; but in so far as I am broken by fatigue and suffering I find this virtue settles down

upon me and I do not wish to steal a woman, but I fall into the heavy sin of pride. And so do those men who discover that they do not wish to steal the objects which in other days they hankered after. Would you not be all too proud, my friend, if you perceived that you no longer had the wish to steal the Emperor's wine? But if you are a thief of wine you may offend your Emperor, whereas if you are proud you will assuredly offend your God."

"I once met a man," said the lieutenant, "who was very ill indeed. He told me that the doctor said that during six months he must keep from woman, wine and song. I asked him if he would obey the doctor, and he said he would begin by leaving off the song."

The aged woman reappeared with fresh *tortillas*, and our host again distributed them as before.

"Another thing," said my good master, "is that here in Mexico especially the art of thieving should not cease. I love the old traditions and the old ways of a country. One may travel through the towns of Andalusia as they are; for me the real Andalusia is the land of Abdul Hassan, who is still besieged in Seville by the hosts of Saint Fernando. I have heard of pilgrims who devoutly walk along the narrow streets and to the famous churches of Assisi; but the town as it will always be to me is the Assisi of that golden morning on which Francis and his comrades came back with the blessing of the great Pope Innocent and were so eager to return with the good news that they forgot to eat and thus arrived exhausted in the valley, though they still were singing. Once when I was in Toledo I was very much distressed, because the population did not seem to notice those who were the only real people of the place and who were striding past me with

the ruffles round their haughty necks and with their ancient but still serviceable swords. It seems to me that Mexico would break entirely with her past if stealing were to be in future practised in a furtive way, without an air and with no humour. Long live Mexico ! ”

He drank and so did all of us. Old Captain Bartolmé was moving his chair nearer to the chair of Enriqueta. But she only looked at the lieutenant or at Don Eugenio.

“ Well, I am sorry we are going to separate,” said the lieutenant to my master, “ for you Spaniards have the gift of talking. That is why you came into the world. But, anyhow, please pass the bottle.”

“ Sir,” said Don Eugenio in his courteous way, “ it would require a great amount of talking if we are to speculate on why we came into the world. And as we find ourselves at present, I believe it will be wiser if we do not launch into the seas of arguing, but simply say that we are here to do the will of God. That, after all, is the sole certainty.”

“ Oh, nonsense ! ” said Don Esteban. “ I know why I am here. A country must have officers to keep good order and preserve it from the Liberals. That is what I have to do, and that is what I shall do, señor the librarian, and if it is God’s will I am glad. But I shall do it anyhow.” He looked a little fierce.

And Enriqueta laid a hand upon his arm. “ My love,” she said, “ of course it is God’s will that you should be a fine lieutenant. Everything we do is God’s will, I am sure, and so that must be why He put us in the world. I prayed to God that it might be His will that I might leave Gonzalez, the disgusting shop-keeper of Colorado, just as I had left this poor old

Captain Bartolmé. And as I had been faithful to them for so long I was rewarded and my prayer was heard, and here I am with you for ever. That is why I came into the world."

The lieutenant looked at her with scorn. "How can a woman be so ignorant," said he, "as to believe that God is interested in such matters? It is very ignorant and also very vile."

But Don Eugenio reproved him, saying that his wine was far superior to his philosophical ideas. "You assert," he said, "that you are in the world in order to destroy a part of it and, on the other hand, you venture to deny this woman's claim, that she is here to love another part. It seems to me that you might take unto yourself the theories of a few of the barbarian fellows who have stated why men come into the world. They are, at all events, not so pernicious as your own. The natives of some southern island, I dare say, believe that they are put there so that they should eat roast pig and other people will maintain that the Creator wants them to be wreathed in flowers and dance all day long in His honour, and the wicked early Lutherans believed that they were in great measure on this world so that they should throw ridicule and odium upon the Pope. 'Sooner Turks than Papists' was their cry. But though it was deplorable that they should think they came here for an object such as this, I do not blame them, O lieutenant, as I must blame you for saying that your purpose here, the reason why you have been given an immortal soul, is to destroy another man. Behold an instance of the curse of thinking! If you cherish thoughts of that kind you must be condemned, but if you are a thoughtless warrior who goes plunging into battle and defends the hearths and altars of his

country and kills other men and is himself brought down, he surely reaches the most high degree of charity. But your belief is infinitely worse than that of Enriqueta, who has told us that she was put in the world to spread her love. I see what you are going to say. But even if she had been spreading it a trifle widely and with insufficient care, I shall not find it difficult to show that if this hour should be the last for you and her, one would be justified in thinking of her future with more confidence. An army of exuberant lovers who now dwell in everlasting bliss could march before you and their serried ranks would almost make you think that if this attribute is of importance in the final reckoning it is on the credit side. Of course there is a Frenchman living now, Jules Simon, who has said that nobody will ever understand the reason why a cause produces an effect ; but while this may be true of mundane matters it need not restrain us from believing that excessive love is rarely an excessive handicap to our eternal prospects. Shall I go for good examples to the saints who were at one time much preoccupied with earthly love, or shall I talk of people who resembled them a great deal but who are, for various reasons, not included in the hierarchy of saints ? It would be simple for me to display to your astonished eyes, young man, a list of persons whom the Church considers holy and who . . ."

"Everyone is holy," interrupted the lieutenant with his mouth full. "I once heard a lunatic say that. But go on with your discourse."

"I am having the most pleasant evening of my life," said Captain Bartolmé, with humble gratitude.

"Shall I describe to you," said Don Eugenio, "how courtesans have been selected as fit candidates, when they were purged, for the most lofty honours. In the

sacred books are numerous examples, both of women and of their male counterparts. I will not speak of them to-night, since you are in the mood, I fear—a mood that I have far too often—which regards these blessed ones with smiles. There is doubtless here and there a saint whose joyous life is of the kind which, notwithstanding, edifies all mortal men; but the Church has warned us that the number of these saints is limited. And therefore I shall run no risk this evening and I shall say no word about the drastic method which Saint Peter of Alcantara employed against his passion of the flesh. But I should like to give you from the ranks of the profane an instance of the tenderness with which it pleases God to look upon a person who is built for loving. Well, this person is myself, and if, in your opinion, I should be more modest, I reply that I do not propose to glorify myself. *Nihil es, nihil potes, nihil vales*. Dear lieutenant, I will cause you to admit, I think, that there are moments in our lives which the majority of human beings would condemn and which God welcomes. I suppose you will agree that everybody has occasions when he is more anxious to set out upon the path of righteousness ? ”

“ How long ago were you converted ? ” asked Don Esteban.

“ I only wish,” said my good master, “ to allude to one occasion in my life when this grand process was at work . . . You will not have heard that once in Aragon, among the mountains, I was an apprentice with my uncle’s company of smugglers, who were celebrated and successful. If it had not been for an unfortunate event I might have stayed with them and never known the seminary or his lordship’s library at Zaragoza or the agitating bookstalls of Madrid or

this flamboyant land of yours. And in the mountains I had also had a very fortunate experience, when I recognized that God is full of kindness and pardon for the sins of overmastering love. We were a party of three men and we were coming back, well laden, over one of the high rocky passes when we found ourselves confronted by some travellers on horseback, evidently people of importance. And they may have been inclined to set some hostile frontiersman upon our track, because they may have had ideas on law and order which—I am so glad to say—I subsequently came to have myself. At any rate we knew it would be better to make sure of them and so we tied their wrists and ankles very firmly, all except those of a girl who stood upon the road defying us, and she was beautiful. Her attitude and her wild eyes and her denunciation of us made her look like one of those old warrior-women, like Thomyris or like Menalippe, who would only yield to Hercules, and when I gazed at her I felt within me the same violence and fury as she had herself."

"Go on! Make haste!" cried the lieutenant.
"What succeeded?"

"She was beautiful," said Don Eugenio, "and my companions were as much attracted to her as I was myself. And while we were discussing in a friendly way what we would do with her, the woman did not cease reviling us and looking splendid. She made much more noise than all the other members of her party put together. And my comrades and myself resolved at last that we would vote respectably for him who was to have the right to her. We settled that it would not be allowed for anyone to vote for his own name. I caught the woman's eye while we were making these arrangements and she knew that

we were serious and that it was no longer wise to stand there in such indiscriminate rebellion; at all events with glances and with little gestures she conveyed to me that I must be the man. Meanwhile, the other two were voting very solemnly and each one voted for the other. And they called to me, and suddenly it struck us that we should elect the one for whom I voted. Juan de la Cruz, who was grizzled and unclean, thought that my vote would be for Santiago who was younger and more like myself, and so he took a pistol from his pocket and Santiago followed his example. 'Now, be careful what you do!' cried Juan de la Cruz. 'Freedom of election! Liberty and the Democracy!' cried Santiago, who repeated some expressions he had heard. The luckless travellers all seemed to have forgotten their misfortune, they were staring like Galicians in a theatre. Then Juan de la Cruz warned me as well that I should have a care, but Santiago waved his empty hand above his head and shouted 'Liberty and the Democracy!' And I could see that the dear woman was extremely troubled; she had got two fingers pressing hard against her lower lip. Then Juan de la Cruz let fly against a rock, perhaps to demonstrate that he was loaded, and the smoke and dust did not allow me to see very well what happened next. I only know that they both fired and hit each other in the legs, and as they cursed and yelled they both fell down, but Santiago in a shrill voice cried his 'Freedom of election! Liberty and the Democracy!' And I made after the dear woman. But my mind was not so taken up with her that I omitted to see God's benevolence. I will not say that I had more love for the woman than had Juan de la Cruz or Santiago, but I was the one whom she preferred. She and I

alone could not have brought this thing to pass, and in believing that it was the work of God I may have been mistaken, but I hope that He did not refuse my thanks."

"The one who shouted 'Freedom of election!'" said old Captain Bartolmé, "had he not got a second bullet?"

I was wondering if Don Eugenio still was fond of her and therefore had concealed her name.

"But," said Enriqueta, "if the woman stood there screaming at you and denouncing you she must have been most horrible to look at. What you should have done . . ."

Then the lieutenant came to Don Eugenio's rescue, for he flung a large *tortilla* into Enriqueta's face. And then he flung another one into the face of Captain Bartolmé. It was impossible to keep from laughing at their ludicrous appearance, and they spluttered not so much because of the *tortillas* being warm as of the shock. And then they tried to brush the yellow fragments all away, and the lieutenant, who was now most jovial, threw another one at Enriqueta's hands. He would have hurled one at the Captain, but he had no more. And suddenly he shouted for the Indian woman. My good master was upon the point of interceding on behalf of those two people, but Don Esteban announced that we would have a different entertainment, and he told the Indian woman to bring in the cocks.

"Here in this room," he said to Don Eugenio, "we will have a cock-fight. It shall not be said that I did not provide an entertainment which is worthy of you. Sir," he said impressively, "one does not often have a private combat, for it is a large expense, but I will give this in your honour."

“Long live our Don Esteban!” cried Enriqueta.
“He is great and generous and noble!”

And the aged woman came back with two baskets which she put down on the floor.

We all got up and clustered round the baskets, but Don Esteban said that he wanted to explain. It would be foolish if the struggle, so he said, were over in as short a time as in a cock-pit, seeing that we only had two cocks. And therefore we would not excite them very much against each other: we would not pluck any of their feathers out and we would not pour *pulque* on their wounds. He said that Don Eugenio might choose whichever bird he wanted, and the wagering should not exceed an ounce or two of gold.

My master waited till the baskets had been opened. Then he told me to select a cock for him. And I was very, very careful, though I really could not judge of the capacities of two strange cocks, and yet I knew a good deal more than my dear master, who had never had one underneath his arm in all his life. At last I thought that one of them would prove the champion and I picked him up and gave him to my master; but the hands of my poor master trembled violently and he tried his best to look as if he did not feel abhorrence.

The lieutenant said magnanimously that I might instruct my master. “Speak into his ear,” he said, “whatever good advice you know.”

And for that purpose we withdrew out of the circle which had formed itself. We went as far away as possible, but all the time I feared the cock would fall or fly out of my master’s hands. I could not think of anything to tell him, save that he should throw the bird as firmly as he could against the other one. However, just as we were getting back into the circle,

where Don Esteban was holding his cock ready, a most painful sound came from the throat of our bird, all his feathers seemed to be erect and, with his beak half-open, he had the appearance of a cock who is about to kill the other at the end of a fluctuating fight. And so it was—with a most horrid screech he flew at the lieutenant's cock, they both rose in the air together, and the other bird was dead and ours was crowing.

The lieutenant naturally was beside himself with rage. He stormed and cursed and stamped his feet and shouted at my master incoherently, and then he seized our cock. He glanced at him, his rage became more vehement than ever. Finally, when he could speak, he told my master he was the most cruel cock-fighter in all the world. My master's nails were not inordinately long, but in his agitation they had penetrated the cock's legs and this had caused the animal to be so fierce.

I will not say what savage words he uttered.

And my master told him that he quite agreed and that in one sense he had been a cruel person. "There is conduct," so he said, "which has not been inspired by a malicious sentiment, and yet produces a result that is deplorable. I think of Voltaire, who was more than ever certain of the innocence of Calas and of the good faith, so cruel, of the Parliament of Toulouse. And I think, sir, that my cruelty, not being of the calculated sort, but due entirely to my nervousness, you might have treated it with some indulgence. I must even ask you to forgive me if I say that such an outcry on account of what you know quite well was inadvertent cruelty is not harmonious with the views that your profession lays upon you. I presume that you do not dissociate yourself from that most eminent commander who was never tired of praising

cruel conduct in a war; he held that if one were engaged with despicable foes there would in a short time be peace, and if it was a gallant foe he would become implacable against your cruelty and then you would salute him and in this way peace would also come."

"I never heard of him in all my life," said the lieutenant. "But what you were doing with that cock, it is abominable. It is . . ." He was working himself up again into a passion. He paced up and down the room.

"My friend," said Don Eugenio, "if you do not desire to pay me what you owe, then do not pay me. But I would be pleased if you will give it to this poor old Captain. He is in distress. You said an ounce or two of gold."

Then as the Captain met the glare in the lieutenant's eye he quailed and muttered something and began to move towards the door. And Enriqueta beckoned to him that he must not go. But she was powerless. And Don Eugenio, who was seated upon one of those big baskets, told the Captain that if he was going back to Colorado he should there receive whatever gold could be extracted from Don Esteban.

"*Carajo!*" snarled Don Esteban, "that eminent commander you were talking of is like some colonels I know very well. They are the most ridiculous commanders ever seen, except those on the other side. And if you think that I will pay you gold—when two men find it easiest to come to an agreement it is for the robbery of someone else."

"Do not reply to that lewd villain!" called out Enriqueta. "Let us all disdain to speak to him! And he shall never see me any more!" She really looked superb. "But you will have some faithful

friends," she said, "who wait for you in Colorado. There we are all friends with one another and if we have paltry cocks like those we throw them out into the jungle. We are frank with one another; as we say in Mexico, we take our garments off."

Then she put her arm around the neck of Captain Bartolmé and so they disappeared. And the lieutenant did not try to stop them. He pretended to be quite indifferent and, as he strode about the room, he gave a jerky laugh. My master, still upon his basket, gazed at the lieutenant with a lack of sympathy. And I was sitting at the table near to the victorious cock, which was engaged in pecking at the relics of our feast. The other cock lay where it had been slain, and the lieutenant kicked it very viciously across the room.

"Young man," said Don Eugenio, "this is the first time I have occupied myself with fighting-cocks, and it may be that, if I had occasion to continue at the game, I should get over the disgust I feel. But I shall always think with horror of the way in which you treat that poor, dead thing . . . O cock," said Don Eugenio, "the man for whom you fought has utterly disgraced himself. He is the kind of soldier who throws insult at a hero, not remembering that you might have led an amorous, triumphant life, and that for his sake you gave everything. It was no quarrel of your own, beloved cock, in which you fell, but merely so that this man should be gratified, and for a moment. Fare you well. And I am glad that you were spared the knowledge of the miscreant's deed; I think that if you had been only wounded when he kicked you and not dead, your loyal gallant heart would then have broken. Fare you well." My master did not wipe away the tears which ran down both his cheeks.

And the lieutenant was a picture of unhappiness. He stood near Don Eugenio and his fingers worked convulsively. "What can I do? What can I do?" said he.

"You interrupt my grief," said Don Eugenio. "You remind me of your Emperor's brother, Francis Joseph. One day at the Zoological Gardens in Vienna he arrived in front of where the eagles are. He burst into a flood of tears, and the officials looked at one another anxiously. 'Your Majesty,' said one of his smart aides, 'if there is anything the matter . . . ' 'Poor, poor eagle,' sobbed the Emperor. 'What can I do? What can I do?' The Chief Inspector of the Gardens ventured to assure his Sovereign that this eagle was quite reconciled to his captivity. 'Oh, my poor, miserable bird,' sobbed Francis Joseph. 'I am truly sorry for you. It is dreadful, dreadful.' 'But indeed,' said the Inspector, 'if your Majesty would graciously observe with what an appetite he will consume his rabbits . . . ' Yet the Emperor was inconsolable. 'He is a bird,' said the Inspector, 'whom we have been very proud of. There is scarcely such another in the mountains of Your Empire.' 'No, no, that is false!' cried Francis Joseph. 'He is a poor, pitiable creature.' 'But what is wrong with him, if I may ask Your Apostolic Majesty?' said the Inspector. 'Oh, you must be drunk,' the Emperor answered, 'or you would have seen that he has only got one head!'"

Of course, the atmosphere was changed completely by this tale, and the lieutenant, sitting down upon the other basket, told my master with a cheerful earnestness that they need not be very sorry for this cock, because the end of many other cocks in Mexico had been more painful. He described the practice

of suspending them by one leg from a pole, right in the middle of the street. And usually round the creature's neck there is a string of coins, which are sometimes counterfeit. And then the cavaliers come galloping along and rise up in their stirrups and endeavour to pull off the creature's head.

But in the middle of all this my master put his hands against his ears. I knew that he was trying strenuously to regard this matter, as he did all others, from the point of view most favourable for the people whom he disapproved of. "As I said before," quoth he, "I possibly might overcome this feeling of disgust. It is a sport which often brings the cock an instantaneous death, and for the men it has some obvious advantages which lotteries and monte and the rest of them do not possess. We have it sharply brought to our attention that a being may at any instant lie in death or be in the enjoyment, as is yonder cock, of all good things. We recognize that our life also is a wonderful adventure, and, in recognizing that, we fling aside the dullness and the emptiness and the banalities. It seems to me that, as one thinks about a cock-fight after it is over, one can hardly keep oneself from hearing the loud trumpets of defeat or victory that will be blowing over us at any moment. And no longer do we think our lives are dull, which is a thought that pleases neither God nor Devil.

"I will tell you that I have regretted that the father of my Juanito should have an establishment of fighting-cocks. I do not know this country very well and thus it is impossible for me to have the confidence which Juanito's father had. His father said that with some knowledge of the Latin language he would be appointed to a post of honour and emolument. For my part, I have always feared lest

Juanito would be in the end obliged to join in breeding cocks. But now these cocks appear to me in a far nobler aspect. It is no disgrace for Father Pedro to be busied with such animals. No, on the contrary. And if I were not an obscure and impotent old man, and if I were not being dragged about by Don Arcadio, this Noahcote, I would in some way let the name of Father Pedro ring across the seas. But who will ever hear about this house of fighting-cocks ?

“ I wonder,” Don Eugenio said—not waiting for an observation which I might have made—“ I wonder when it was that cocks began to be esteemed for this or any other virtues. One remembers that Saint Clement celebrates the cock as symbol of the resurrection and he is depicted on the tombs of early Christians. As the day and night were thought of as an image of the resurrection—‘ *Dies et nox*,’ said Saint Clement, ‘ *resurrectionem nobis declarant : cubat nox, exsurgit dies* ’—it was natural that as a symbol of the resurrection one should take the cock, the herald of the day. Also, I am pleased that I have not forgotten that they used him as a symbol of Christian vigilance. It all comes back to me from my vague, miscellaneous studies in the library at Zaragoza. You, sir, will not contradict me if I venture to assert that Gregory the Great and Saint Eucherius laid it down concerning cocks that they are as the preachers who, amid the shadows of this life, announce the life that is to come. I cannot call to mind exactly where Eucherius says these words, because we had at Zaragoza more than one of his distinguished volumes. In the *De Contemptu Mundi* my discerning bishop very ardently admired the beauty of the style and the great delicacy of the sentiments ; and as he was himself most humble he was always apprehensive lest

he should be shown to be deficient in the former. So, when he prepared his Pastorals, he used to fortify his style by studying attentively this elevated work.

“Eucherius likewise is the author of the *Acts of the Martyrdom of Saint Maurice and his Comrades*. It is all related by Eucherius in a very honest fashion and with his accustomed literary excellence, while he refrains from buttressing his tale with miracles, such as the one we have from other sources which describes how at the building of Agaunum’s great basilica there was among the labourers a pagan who continued working on a Sunday and how then the company of gleaming martyrs came back from their grave to fling him down and fall upon him in the charitable goodness of their hearts, because it made him forth-with vow that he would be a Christian. When I talk approvingly,” said Don Eugenio, “of these martyrs it is only of their good intentions, for I think they ought not to have used the man so scurvily; they ought to have instructed him and shown him how the Sunday should be spent; and after this, had he been stubborn and rebellious to their merciful teaching, then in God’s name let him fall under the censure. But to knock him down with no preliminaries, that is not a method of conversion which can be attributed to saints without a great offence to their charity. However, as I said, Eucherius does not write a word about this miracle, and yet there are some learned men who say emphatically and with many proofs that one must disbelieve his tale and that there was no martyrdom and therefore that it was ridiculous and sacrilegious to construct a church upon the spot and let the pilgrims come in multitudes. But we shall never know for certain if the martyrdom did not

occur and if it is an oriental legend ; there have been a number of esteemed historians who pondered over the same texts for years and years, and came to opposite conclusions. We are told by certain writers that the students who do not believe these old traditions are afraid to bring upon themselves the hatred of the monks and friars who make trade of these impostures among silly women."

"I have just been thinking of her," interrupted the lieutenant. "If we go into the town we may find Enriqueta somewhere."

"Very likely. On the other hand," said Don Eugenio, "you will admit that people are too quick to cast aspersions on all kinds of ancient men and women on the ground that their achievements seem improbable. God, what a reason ! We ourselves, who are so far removed from being saints, do we not find ourselves, with God's assistance, doing deeds to-day which yesterday would have appeared impossible ? And learned men, I say, can spend their time far better than in proving to us that a saint whom we have venerated is no saint at all. The Master of the Saints will surely know how to dispose of any prayers that we send up to the saints or holy ones who were invented by some monkish chronicler, and so we can do things much worse than praying to Saint Christopher or Saint Longinus or the Eleven Thousand Virgins or the Martyrs of the Theban Legion, under Maurice, as to all of whom there has been acrimonious dispute."

"I should be very glad to find her," quoth Don Esteban, as he got up. "Come, let us go."

"I would not hinder you," said Don Eugenio. "By all means let us walk about the town until the watchmen grow suspicious. I am sure that Enriqueta

has escaped. And if you can forget her . . . By the way," said my good master, "I am going to take with me to Tamaulipas a brown book which I have bought, the *Security against Oblivion* which a man called Robles wrote a hundred years ago, here in this country. It is the official 'Life' of an archbishop, and I think it may console us in the perils of that expedition. At any rate it is a very foolish expedition, and it will be difficult for me to keep that calmness and serenity which are appropriate to my condition. If I cannot soothe my fellow-travellers and myself I shall recite some passages from this most edifying book, and thus we shall regain our equanimity."

But as he said these words and was proceeding slowly from the room that cock flew from the table and, perhaps in consequence of something it had drunk or eaten, hurled itself against my master's face. And all confused and spitting feathers from his mouth and in a voice of loathing he addressed the bird :

"Thou reprobate and graceless one, is this the way in which to celebrate thy victory ? O natives of the town of Sybaris, held up to mockery because you could not bear the crowing of the cocks and therefore banished them. O citizens of Sybaris, you did not act with weakness but with mighty wisdom !"

The lieutenant said that we should lose all chance of finding Enriqueta if we did not go. He said that he knew many of the watchmen and they would not tell him lies, and we would find the fugitives.

We never found them. The lieutenant tramped along in front of us and I ran after him and Don Eugenio came next, and he was out of breath. Whenever I turned round to see if I could help him he commanded me, by means of a brusque movement of

his arm, to hasten on. The streets were so deserted at this hour that even when he was extremely far behind us I could hear his stumbling, heavy footsteps and his groaning and his panting, and at intervals he made again the noise of spitting feathers from his mouth.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN our procession left Jalapa, on the second morning after this, the town was very agitated by some awful rumours. It was being said that now the Liberals were returning and that this time they would sack the place, and also that the patron saint of the Imperialists was so displeased with Maximilian having taken to himself a German Jesuit as confidant that she would henceforth help the other side, and also there was in the market-square a Belgian of the bodyguard who said aloud that he and his companions had so often thrashed the Mexicans—he meant, of course, the Liberals—that they probably had learned the art themselves and he was going to leave the cursed country. Those who heard him were in such a terrible excitement that they did not stop to have a single word with him. The women and the men were hurrying about in a distracted fashion ; it was being noised abroad that women would be made to promenade the *plaza* with their children, so that if the Liberals besieged the town they would, through motives of high chivalry, not aim into the *plaza*. This was quite a new idea which Maximilian's European soldiers had suggested to the governor of the town ; the Liberals knew nothing of it. And amid this general confusion there was hardly anyone who looked a second time at us, and that is how we rode away. If there had not been all this turmoil, I am sure a good part of the population would have

followed Don Arcadio's mule and would have asked Faustino, who was walking with a baggage-mule, if he would tell them our intentions. On the next three animals were Don Eugenio and Maria and myself—I think Faustino got the mules, and as there was one for the girl she mounted it and came with us.

And what did I care when we left the town behind us and no single person of our company said anything? If this had been a funeral procession, I would still have had my thoughts immensely occupied with that long map from Don Arcadio's wall which he had rolled up till it looked as if it were a lance, and which he carried fastened to his back. The coloured people on it, and the trees which were like long, brown rivers, and the writing everywhere which looked like flowers that a child would paint, and then the gods and the extraordinary mountains and a chief whose legs and arms were covered with the plumage of gay birds—all these had sent me dreaming from the day when first I saw them, and to think that we were actually going to travel in accordance with this marvellous affair! A flame was rushing up and down my body, and I murmured a few bars of that old song, the dear Paloma.

Don Eugenio turned round in his saddle and was evidently pleased. "You sing that song," he said, "at the right moment. Have I told you of the *jefe* whom I heard not long ago inside a drinking-shop where he explained to anyone who cared to listen how he had remained so honest? He related that in moments of temptation, when a wicked man was trying hard to bribe him or when, in some other way, the hands of Justice were in danger of not working freely, he would hum a portion of that song and thus the patriotic fervour would come over him and he

would utterly reject the tempters. And he also said he did not know what happened in the House of Congress in the capital, but he believed they ought to station there a choir perpetually chanting this Paloma, even if it had the usual result of making deputies inaudible."

Our patron, Don Arcadio, had reined his mule back, so that he was riding level with the pair of us. "Of course," he said, "if it is true that all the various ingredients of earth can be transmuted into one another, then there will no longer be a reason for esteeming gold above the rest of them. I should be pleased to pull this metal down and others like it from their pedestals. I should be so much nearer my great object."

"On the other hand," said Don Eugenio—there was a grim line of laughter round his lips—"I am more than half afraid," he said, "that you would be much further from it. Surely you would rouse to desperation all those people who are thickly crusted round with gold and are esteemed for nothing else. And they have always been brought up to think that they are firm upon their pedestals. They are a million times more numerous than those great golden statues in the Babylonian temple and the statues of Lucullus and of Pompey."

"Which have been pulled down," said Don Arcadio. His mule put back its ears and kicked my master's animal. There had not been the smallest provocation, and my master's mule did not retaliate. "Where are those golden statues now?" asked Don Arcadio, after he had composed himself again upon his saddle.

"If it comes to that," said Don Eugenio, "I have heard that in Arabia at one time there were flourishing a thousand and twenty-five poets, and although I

have not read their works I am prepared to wager that a good proportion of them sang about the change and transitoriness of things. And there was one person in my own country, Lope de Vega, who went so far as to proclaim that the sea and play and love and fortune are unrecognisable as such without change. What a great man," said my master, "is that poet! He is commonly belittled by this world of little men, because he wrote in such prodigious quantities. I think your mule is going to kick again."

"He drags my arms out of their sockets," Don Arcadio said. "I hope he will grow tamer by and by."

"There was a famous writer in Madrid," said Don Eugenio. "He used to patronize our bookstall, and I can remember how he told us, drawing himself up to his full height and speaking with a voice that trembled, how he told us that if Spain possessed an army which was worth its pay, like England's army, and some battleships as good as England's and, beyond all else, as much in the Exchequer as there was in England's, then would Lope de Vega be as famous as Shakespeare . . . I do not assert," said Don Eugenio, "that Lope de Vega and Shakespeare will pass away, but in the end the golden statues are pulled down and I imagine that the men who pull them are themselves not seldom crushed. But, sir, what is your special reason for desiring to be that kind of reformer?"

Don Arcadio shook his head. "Well," he explained with care, "it is not statues, it is gold that I am wanting to pull down. My special reason is that—it is like a saying of our Liberal statesmen: 'Liberty and the Democracy!' And I am more a Liberal than most of them, because I mean it. I wish to apply to all the substances of earth what they pretend, or most

of them pretend, it is their aim to practise upon human beings. Why should gold or princes be regarded as above their fellows ? ”

“ Really,” said my master, “ this is most enjoyable. How melancholy we all were at the beginning of the ride ! And now, *caramba* ! I feel so exhilarated that I do not care how much I moralise. I do not care how humble are my illustrations. I suggest that as the representative of aristocracy we take that mule of yours. If he may lead the others he will be content and probably he is a most efficient leader and, if circumstances did not thwart him, he would certainly be leading now. With all respect to you, dear friend, and your great work of transmutation, it is less than likely that you will be able to transmute one mule into another mule, one prince into another man. And I will even beg to doubt if you will ever be successful in transmuting gold, for you have had long rows of predecessors.”

“ Ha ! ” cried Don Arcadio triumphantly, “ but you are wrong ! If you put certain naked princes in a crowd of naked people, do you think that anyone will know who is a prince ? ”

“ I am astonished,” said my master, “ that you should be satisfied with such an argument that goes no further than the surface. Look, if you have got the power, more deeply into all those naked ones and you will recognise that some of them are real princes.”

“ But the princes of this world are never chosen in that manner,” Don Arcadio pointed out.

“ And more’s the pity. Though there would be one enormous obstacle,” said Don Eugenio, “ for how should we restrict the number of electors ? I think only those should have the suffrage who themselves are eligible for election. Surely I have told you the

old proverb that it is the nightingale alone which understands the rose. But more and more the suffrage is extended, so that even if the real prince were chosen by some accident and were to sit unclothed administering equity, then he would have no glamour in the eyes of his unworthy audience."

"And as the people who are in the seats of princes . . ."

"Oh, I quite agree with you, alas," said Don Eugenio, "they should not be there; but even if the people who revere them are a crowd of fools and we are not, should we not make ourselves the greater fools if, having nothing to set up, we try to pull the princes down? And in the golden statues of antiquity there often was, so I have read, a covering of gold on bronze or wood; the people worshipped with more ardour and emotion since they thought the statue was of solid gold. And if the gold which should have been inside the statue had been taken by a thief, would he not have been a far greater thief who could have taken from the people their illusions? I believe," said Don Eugenio, "that a prayer is often grander and more lovely than the god. We said a little time ago that all things pass away, and yet I like to think that lovely thoughts have children and endure for ever."

We had now come to a path so narrow that the mules could only go in single file and I am sure that Don Arcadio's was very pleased. The branches overhead were almost meeting one another, while the blue and yellow flowers which hung down from them were being struck by Don Arcadio's long map. He must have studied it acutely in Jalapa, since he was so certain that this was the proper path for us. But I for one was not particularly anxious that we should not lose the way; I will confess that the ingenious and

grandiose designs in Don Arcadio's head were not as dear to me as Don Arcadio would have wished. Ah no, he probably did not think I was capable of following such beautiful, august and philosophical ideas. But all the benefits which they would soon or late confer upon humanity I should—this I am sure he had decided—I should to the full enjoy when he himself was dead. The path meandered through the undergrowth, and as I was the last of the procession I could sometimes not see anyone except Maria who was just in front of me, and when I was enabled to catch sight of Don Arcadio and his map my heart was warm with kindly thoughts for him; but chiefly I was hoping that we would get off our animals and gather round the map and then consult and argue and discuss and speculate, as if we were a band of real brigands.

It would happen now and then that we emerged into an open space, from which we could look out beyond the palm-trees and the other trees to where they lost themselves in the pale distance. But we likewise saw the mountain ranges on our left and these it was that we would have to cross and they did not look any nearer than from Don Arcadio's house. We only walked our mules, because Faustino was on foot. And it was not a path for rapid riding, even if the mules had wanted to go quickly. Now and then, I say, we found ourselves on a green, open space, but very seldom did we see a bamboo hut with someone strolling round it, very seldom did we hear the voice of pigs which told us that there was a hut inside the jungle, still more seldom did we meet a traveller—this country was but thinly populated.

Still we did come to a village after several hours and the people of it led us to the *pulque* shop, which was their inn. Outside it hung a painting, not a very

good one, of the Holy Family ; but otherwise that inn was not more glorious than any of its neighbours, which were all constructed of bamboo and with a thatch of palm-leaves. Don Arcadio ascertained that the proprietor had nothing we could eat, not even beans nor pineapples, but merely jars of *pulque* which, said Don Arcadio, would not be helpful to assist us on the way, and so he ordered that we should proceed right through the village and should halt beside the first stream we encountered. We had not a large supply of food upon Faustino's mule—since it was necessary for us to bring clothing for the nights and also sundry tools which were to dig the gold of Tamaulipas—but we should be able without doubt, said Don Arcadio, to replenish our supply of food in other places. And we passed all through the village, being only followed by some children and some dogs and the proprietor—a melancholy person—of the *pulque* shop. I wondered what reproaches he would level at us, but when we arrived outside the village and beheld a stream of water and got off our mules, this man assisted Don Arcadio and Don Eugenio, who were naturally rather stiff, to leave their saddles. Yet he did not speak, except to mutter at a child or two who were already bathing in the stream. But when my master stretched himself luxuriously on the water's bank and said that now we surely had come to the end of all our troubles, this man only sighed and said " Which end ? " And presently he went back to the village.

We remained an hour or two, reposing. That is, all of us reposed with the exception of the Noahcite. My master was unloosening the stirrup which he had upon his right foot—an old stirrup made of steel and silver—when he happened to remark that it would be

a most uninteresting world in which the metals could all be transmuted into one another. But he did not think, he said, and with profound respect for Don Arcadio, that this consummation would be ever brought about. "In fact," he said, "I have a notion that your metals take upon themselves an individuality, so that one piece of silver is not just the same as every other piece."

The Noahcite was thoroughly aroused. He sat bolt upright and expressed himself with vigour.

But my master spoke at the same time, nor did he bother to lift up his voice. He had detached the spur, and now as he lay down beside the Noahcite he made himself as comfortable as he could, he drew his hat down on his eyes and said :

"Of course I do not know as much of metals as of books. You may have noticed that a man is not the same in every work. The treasures of invention and of eloquence may not be gathered always by the greatest of us, and the learned Vossius was right when he condemned a critic who denied that Xenophon was author of the Expedition of Cyrus, because forsooth the critic was unable to discern in it all those inimitable strokes of eloquence which are the mark of that illustrious historian."

The Noahcite was talking loudly and his arms were moving up and down.

"They said of him," quoth Don Eugenio, "that he had all the sweetness which a man can have. Perhaps he did not soar into the heights with Plato nor descend into the secret causes with Thucydides." And then my master fell asleep.

I do not know how long the Noahcite continued to discourse about his metals. When Maria came with me into a shady spot a little further down the river

he was talking in a very mournful fashion, being evidently grieved that Don Eugenio should go on living in such error. And for his part Don Eugenio had a smile upon the lower portion of his face, the only portion that there was exposed. And in his sleep he murmured, "All the sweetness, sweetness."

When we started off again we knew that we would have to camp that night on this side of the mountains—we would not come near another village. And as we were unaccustomed to such lengthy rides, we all of us were very glad when Don Arcadio's mule stopped suddenly as it was crossing a small open space and then lay down upon a pile of moss. The Noahcite himself received no injury, but he accepted Don Eugenio's suggestion that this would be a delicious and convenient place for an encampment. In five minutes we were all collecting twigs of wood and in a very short time after this Maria had begun to cook our evening meal. This was to be the first meal and the last of Don Arcadio's famous expedition.

CHAPTER XVIII

It has never caused me grief that I am so incapable of writing on our scenery. The editors and other journalists of Mexico are nearly always poets, and the students, both of medicine and law, seem to have ample time to spare for poetry, and I have heard of some great General or Minister or Bishop coming to a town of which the mayor receives him with the recitation of a poem he himself has written, while the schoolmaster is asked to hand a copy of his ceremonial poem to the great man's adjutant or secretary, to the end that it may be perused at leisure. So you see that if we are deficient here in certain things, in poets we are wonderfully well-provided. I believe that many of our splendid swarms of poets have described the scenery, and who am I that I should hope to follow them? It is a subject that is too magnificent for such a one as I. And yet I always think with sorrow of that evening in our expedition when the baseless mountains seemed to float in air and to have wreathed around their summits a faint garland of no colour I had ever seen, it was the colour of the dreams, perhaps, of grandfathers when they have played with little children. And the sky was like a flock of shadows gathering in fields of ivory. I think with grief about that evening on account of the calamitous events I am about to tell you and also on account of the divine events, a pageant so tremendous on the tree-tops and the mountains and the sky that even in the

middle of our panic and the clash of arms, of which you will be learning soon, I had to gaze in wonderment around me. Well, it seems that as I am no poet I will place the scenery before you like a corpse to gaze at; and I have been told that in the foreign countries where the law does not prevent one from dissecting corpses one regards with pity and contempt the people who are satisfied with gazing.

First of all, when we had finished supper, we unrolled the map and spread it on the ground; Faustino took a piece of burning wood out of the fire and held it over this or that part of the map, as Don Arcadio directed. No one, except Don Arcadio himself, knew how to read the map and he explained it to us very well.

And afterwards, when Don Eugenio was lying there—his back supported by his saddle—and Maria and Faustino and myself were putting blankets round the fire or getting other twigs of wood or doing nothing, Don Arcadio walked to and fro in meditation. Then my master started speaking and we gradually all assembled near him, that is, we sat round the fire, and in the darting light of it I could perceive that everyone was listening intently.

“There must be many people,” so he said, “who have imagined that if they could wander in the open country, with a few companions, they would free themselves from all the squalor and the wickedness and cruelty of towns. Who has not heard them speaking of the wilderness as though it were a place of healing, where the wind would drive away whatever evil may have settled on them and where they would presently develop virtues? *Bueno*, we are in the wilderness, and it is seemly that we should consider what is going to happen. If we do not find ourselves

improving, ought we to be very much ashamed? And will the shame be forced upon us by the sight of other and more edifying people? Or shall we be blind to all their greatness?

"I believe," said Don Eugenio, "that the inhabitants of places such as this are naturally just as wayward, just as noble or abandoned as the dwellers in a town. And we are clearly meant to take this view, because, whatever else may be uncertain as to Adam and his faults for which we still are suffering, his existence—if he did exist—was in the country."

"I am not uncertain as to Noah," said the Noahcite.

"But when the people of the town go out into the country," said my master, "they are in a state of freedom or of lawlessness—whichever you may like to call it—that they have not known before. They are as travellers in Spain who ask the landlord of a little hostelry what he can give them, and the answer is that he can give them everything and then, on being pressed, he adds, 'Of what Your Grace has in his saddle-bags.' If you want all your furniture of laws out in the country, you must take them with you. And do you believe," said Don Eugenio, "that the greater lawlessness in which these country-people live has the effect of making them more virtuous? They are restricted and are supervised far less than dwellers in the town, and so are able to give far more play to all their appetites and passions. Being deeply stirred, as are the townsmen, by the elementary demands for food and women, they are not so much debarred from taking either; even if the conscientious king or president sees fit to make the town laws applicable to the country, he will not apply them. It may be, of course, that when the average countryman has taken all he wants of food, or land-producing food, and

women, he is satisfied and settles down into a creditable life, whereas the townsman is prevented, more or less, from reaching a condition of satiety. And if that is the general case one might advance the theory that the laws should be removed a little from the townsman, so that in the first place he should be more natural, and in the second that he should attain the country person's happy state. In fact, the laws have been so frequently condemned by philosophic people, seeing that they make life duller and less natural and altogether less attractive that I scarcely know why we maintain them. And if lawless people wax in virtue, while the people who live under laws are constantly at odds with them, does it not seem advisable to brush these laws away? Then life would be worth living for a townsman and he would in time become as satisfied and virtuous as any dweller in the country. Ah, but there is a most grave objection, for the virtue which flows into us when we are satisfied is not much more worth having than the virtue which grows under a policeman's eye. And, by the way, there is another school of thought which says that virtue does not flourish if it is not under the command of laws. 'Take the severe restraint away,' says Seneca, 'and what will then become of virtue?—*Imperia dura tolle, quid virtus erit?*' He would have told us that we are mistaken when we praise the virtues of the country-people on the ground that they are relatively lawless. And he would not have extolled the virtue which is the result of satisfied desire. I hope," said Don Eugenio, "that you appreciate how much I feel all this, since nobody is more aware than I am of how little virtue I possess and how much that exceeds the quantity there was in me before my body and my spirit had been battered for so

long and thrown from side to side and made into uninteresting ruins. . . . But we talk of satisfied desire, and is there such a thing ? With most of us I fancy that it means that we have come into the state when the desire in us has withered. And, by all the saints, how can we be without desire ? O let not our desires grow blunt or satisfied ! We should be as the glow-worm when the passionate beauty of his light goes out. O let there be such laws and such restrictions over us that we are always striving, always serving, always adding to the beauty of the world . . .”

“And so,” said Don Arcadio, with a puzzled air, “you want us to be under laws and you were saying that you did not want us to be under them so much. Is that not so ?”

“My friend,” said Don Eugenio, “the only attribute of greatness which I have in me is that I do not fear to contradict myself . . . I have arrived at the conclusion that the great laws which protect from us such things as other people’s food and women are most excellent—the little laws about a thousand other things I do not speak of. God be thanked that we are constantly repressed by those great laws, and it is God perhaps and not the wisdom of our ancestors who first established them. Can you imagine that a single race of men would have deprived themselves of the enjoyment of these two commodities, unless they had been under the impression that this was the will of God or of the Devil ? I do not pretend to know how these repressive and most admirable laws began to be established, but if it was owing to the Devil’s influence—which I consider very likely—there is not the smallest reason for us to repine, since it would be repugnant to our common sense if we did

not believe that God employs the Devil, when he can be profitably used, and that if God were not more satisfied than otherwise He would before now have destroyed him. Well, if I were asked to paint a portrait of the Earliest Great Legislator I should not be much disposed to let him have a venerable and inspired appearance ; on the contrary, I should depict a savage who is in the throes of physical discomfiture produced by an excessive yielding to these two desires or one of them. And in the sluggish brain of that poor man we have the source of subsequent great laws. The ignorance in which he was himself enveloped should not make our gratitude less hearty : if he thought it was the Devil working in him I believe that ultimately it was God. Because the work of this man and of his successors looks as if it were an accident we should not blasphemously think it is so. I have seen a beautiful, old bridge that spans a road and joins the chapter-house of a cathedral to the vicar's close. The two ends of the bridge were not exactly opposite each other, for which reason it was necessary for the bridge to turn at a slight angle ; furthermore, the ground was not so high at one side, so that there the arch was built upon a lower level. And the whole affair was most divinely picturesque. No doubt a modern architect would say that this was accidentally achieved—and I am sure that he himself would have corrected both the inequalities and have destroyed the beauty. I believe that when the Architect of Things produces His incomparable work it does not rest on accident.

“ As for these relatively lawless people of the open country,” said my master, “ it behoves us to regard them not with feelings of aversion but with pity. They are far less fortunate than we are. And, who

knows ? perhaps we shall be able to persuade a few of them to bow to our own stricter laws, which are so great a blessing."

Scarcely had my master said these words when we were conscious of a troop of men among the trees. I tried to think how soon they would burst in upon us and assassinate us, but they seemed to stop. We sat in the most perfect silence, gazing at each other. And I felt the blood jerk to and fro inside Maria's hand.

Of course we had some weapons, but they were not lying near us round the fire, except Faustino's long *machete*, which was useful for the cutting off of branches. And we sat there just as if we never would get up again . . . The people who were watching us were all so silent and the night was growing dark. I shivered as I looked into the fire, which now seemed smaller and more ruddy, but this may have been because of the surrounding darkness. Anyhow, as I looked up again I thought I could see many ruddy eyes that glared and flashed among the trees. And then Faustino crossed himself and started muttering about his sins. I heard him groan that if he had been better this would not have happened.

But my splendid master interrupted him. He tried to speak in his most ordinary voice. "My dear Faustino, I should like to tell you of a boy," he said, "who swore that he would do one good act every day, and it was near the point of midnight on a certain day and he could think of nothing good which he had done. He therefore gave his white mouse to the cat."

"Alas, alas, I have done nothing," said Faustino. "But nevertheless I will be of good cheer"—he straightened himself and bit his lower lip—"because

I have such faith in God. I am sure that if He likes He can protect us in this horrible position."

"Why then did He bring us into it?" said Don Arcadio.

I was so glad that they were speaking. It might even happen, so I thought, that if the people in the dark observed how good and harmless were my master and the Noalcite and all of us they would be kind. And then I hoped they would emerge, because I really was inquisitive to see them.

Don Eugenio rolled over on his side and with his face towards the fire. "Ah, well," he said, in a loud voice, "I think we ought to go to sleep or we shall not be ready for the road to-morrow morning. Now may God have pity on us always." And he actually shut his eyes, as if he were in his own comfortable bed.

But Don Arcadio was rather agitated still. He shifted first to this side, then to that, and then he burst out with some words that were not wise. "Yes, that is it," said he, "and may God recollect how you have pity on the lawless people of the countryside."

"I have pity on them," said my master, opening his eyes and speaking very clearly, "I have pity on them if their gold miscarries, that is, if by chance the gold which we are going to fetch from Tamaulipas does not find its way into the pockets of the gallant country-people."

Then I heard a whispering among the trees. It was a hurried consultation, and in a very little time the noise increased, as they were not by any means of one opinion. Here and there a word was audible and oaths and exclamations—until one man spoke in rough command and said that they would go back to the place where they had left their animals and there, he said, they would take counsel. And his

comrades very soon obeyed him ; we could hear them talking as they went.

We looked at one another and the same thought came into our heads ; but all of us, save Don Arcadio, knew it was hopeless to attempt to run away from them in such a country.

"If only one could pack the mules," said Don Arcadio.

We did not answer him, and my good master said that, as presumably we should that night have little sleep, we ought to take this opportunity, while they were arguing about us. It would not astonish him, he said, if they assisted us by slaying one another.

"If they were religious people," said Faustino, "it would be so simple. But they are the Liberals, I am sure, and they will not respect the holy Catholic religion."

"Well, if you have always done so," said my master, "then you can await your destiny without uneasiness. Come, let us try to sleep."

"Señor," he said, "it shall be so. But there was someone in Jalapa who once told me that when he was fighting with an enemy and they were all of them good Catholics it was so different. His troop was being hunted, it was nearly captured. Then it came into a village, and as they were riding past the church, one of the troop leaped from his horse and asked a man to lead it to the stream and there to wait for him. He ran himself into the church—all this was in our State of Veracruz—and fortunately there was someone in the inside, sweeping it. He made that man go with him to the sacristy—he held out his revolver at him—in the sacristy they took some garments of the priest and these the soldier put upon himself ; they found the little table with its white cloth and they also found

the bell—these things he forced the village man to carry and to march before him out into the open air. And I must not forget that in his own hands he was carrying the Holy Sacrament, with the revolver hidden somewhere up his sleeve. As they went slowly from the church, which was a blue and white one . . .”

“But, my dear Faustino,” said my master, “I assure you I believe the tale as if I had been there myself.”

“And it was in the State of Veracruz,” Faustino said. “As they went slowly from the church the people of the village who perceived them knelt with one accord and prayed. They did not stop to look into the face of either of them. And the troop of enemies came galloping along and in a moment they were off their horses and were kneeling and were praying. Very slowly did the man walk with the Sacrament, and in the end he slipped behind a house, he took those garments off and ran to where the horse was hidden. After that he only had to ride by certain forest paths to where his comrades were expecting him.”

We spoke of other things a little. Then we tried to hear what they were doing, and then suddenly their captain called to us in his rough voice and he was not far off. He told us that if we delivered to them such things as they wanted they would not molest us. We might think it over, he announced, for several minutes, and he told us that he was called Bustamante.

“Bustamante! He is the most powerful in all the region,” said Faustino, who was filled with awe. “Oh, would that it were true that God can write straight lines on paper ruled with crooked ones.”

“It seems to me,” said Don Eugenio, “from the way in which the Señor Bustamante spoke that we had

better keep our minds upon the earth. Suppose one of your water-sellers lets the water be abstracted from the small jug which he has in front of him and from the large one which he has behind him. You might think at first that he would be a useless man, but I believe that they are largely used in Mexico to carry messages. Now there are times when we must not allow the hero in us to display himself."

"Oh, if we fight them," said Maria, "they will send us all into the other life."

"And I would sooner go to Tamaulipas," said my master. "Shall we say that we agree to their conditions?"

"What is all our property," quoth Don Arcadio, "compared with the fulfilment of my plans? I very willingly agree."

"Señor Bustamante!" said my master in his loud voice. "Have the goodness to approach. We are at your disposal."

Bustamante shouted that we should stand up and hold our hands above our heads. And as he and his followers came out into the open space we saw that they were numerous. They had their black and red striped rugs which fell down from their shoulders to their feet, but the *sombreros* showed that they were Liberal soldiers . . . What they wanted chiefly were the money and the weapons. Don Arcadio and Faustino helped in placing these and other things around the fire. They treated us much better than I had expected, which perhaps was partly owing to the prudence of the Noahcite and of Faustino, who obeyed their slightest wish and evidently did not want to hide a single thing. The Noahcite enquired if they would like to have some bottles of old brandy, but the captain thanked him and declined it.

"Notwithstanding," said Don Arcadio, "let us drink each other's health."

And as they drank they all became so cordial, they loudly praised us and they twined their arms around us and they said that never had they been with travellers as pleasant as ourselves, and never had they tasted any beverage more pleasant than this brandy. Don Arcadio ordered that another bottle and another should be opened. He himself was kissed on both his cheeks by Bustamante, who invited him to join their band. But Don Arcadio said that he must go to Tamaulipas.

"We have heard all that about your gold!" cried Bustamante. "You will never find it! Go with us, I say!"

His comrades, who were drinking rapidly, exhorted us to go with them. "We find more gold above the surface," they declared, "than you will ever get in Tamaulipas."

"But, my friends," said Don Arcadio, "I know where it was hidden by the natives. And I have my reasons why I wish to find it. One of them is that I shall present a portion of the gold to you."

They laughed at him, they patted him upon the back, they drank his health again and urged my master to persuade him to go with their merry band.

"*Caramba!* if we go with you or if we do not go," my master said, "it is not I who want to march to Tamaulipas. In comparison with Don Arcadio I am very ignorant about the metals, but I do know that, according to Agricola, the mediæval German, twelve men who were taking buried silver from a mine, the Crown of Rose, were killed by a great spirit

that was temporarily inside a horse's body. I am certain there are many more examples. But in loyalty I am obliged to follow Don Arcadio."

Some of them approved so thoroughly of my dear master that they called out, "May the Spaniard live!" And some of them had fallen to the ground and some were singing. Then it was that the large Aztec map was found between the blankets of the Noahcite, and he who found it swore this was a secret map which gave all their positions and that Don Arcadio was a spy of the Imperialists. At once there rose a pandemonium: "Let him be hanged!" "The traitors!" "Strip them to the uttermost!" "Oh, fools that we have been!" "They are the instruments of the accursed Archduke!" "Liberty and the Democracy!" "Let all of them be hanged!" "This brandy has been poisoned!" "We are in a trap!" "The vile conspirators!" "Crowned devils!" "They are worse than North Americans!" "Will they escape?" "Oh, spare the pretty kitten!" "Long live Juarez and the Revolution!" "So they would deceive us!" "But we are not foolish!" "Kill them!" "After they are tortured!"

Then they flung themselves upon us. And with ropes and cords they started tying up our hands. One villain gave my master such a blow that a long stream of blood came from his forehead. And I do not think my master had opposed him in the slightest . . . When we all were lying there so helplessly they told us that if anyone endeavoured to escape he would be shot. They settled down between us and the fire, on which they piled more wood; two men were posted on the outskirts of the open space, they leaned against the trees and watched us.

"What is this, you shameless one?" cried Bustamante, who had overheard some angry words which Don Arcadio was muttering to himself. "My comrades! He has dared to say that we are brigands! We, the soldiers of the revolution! We, who are re-establishing the social guarantees!"

A comrade here and there growled bloodthirsty advice, but they did not themselves rise up to cut off any part of Don Arcadio's body. The most sensible of all of them said it was opportune for everyone to sleep, and the Imperialists, he said, were made like that—to them there was no difference, for they were so depraved, there was no difference between a brigand who takes anything and Liberal soldiers who give everything and are prepared to give their lives. "Liberty and the Democracy!" said he. "And now let everybody go to sleep."

They spoke no more and even the two sentinels appeared to have obeyed his bidding. At all events they did not stop me when I rolled myself to where my master lay. The blood was now no longer flowing from his wound and he had both his eyes shut, though I could not see if he was sleeping . . . How repulsive and how cruel was the world. I never, never, never would do anything but loathe it, after what had happened to my dear old master.

There was now a little wind among the tree-tops, and the sky on which their dark forms seemed to move was growing paler. And the wind was gently driving the large clouds.

I saw the hated bodies of our foemen more distinctly. How I wished that everyone would be plunged down into the darkness of the lowest hell.

A silver lace was thrown across the summits of the

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trees and now the mountains rising up behind them had mysterious caves between the blackness. And the moon came over the black mountain range, and on each sailing cloud it was as if a lamp were lit, and I shall never see a sight as beautiful.

CHAPTER XIX

DON EUGENIO was sitting by me and he had awakened me ; the others all seemed to be busy rolling up the rugs or putting burdens on our mules. And as they walked about they spoke to one another very little and they ate their food, and I saw one who gave the Noahcite a kick.

My master's face was very mournful as he put his hand on mine and told me that I must observe most carefully what he was going to say. This was for the moment, so he said, the thing which was most pressing. Then he told me that Maria now belonged to Bustamante and that if a word or glance of mine displeased the captain he would probably assassinate me.

I was horrified to hear that this big blustering fellow had so soon succeeded, even though Maria was Maria. Could she not have been more faithful to me and to Don Eugenio ? Yes, really when I looked at my dear master's mournful face and at the wound upon his brow, I was indignant with Maria more especially because she had abandoned *him*.

"Poor Don Eugenio," said I, "and it was you that rescued her. She is a monster of ingratitude."

He smiled a little. "If," said he, "we had applied ourselves more thoroughly to Roger Bacon, who was a great alchemist and chemist also, then perhaps we could explain by chemistry why the affections of a woman alter. Mind you, it would not console me.

And in this case other agencies were brought to bear. But I am grieved that we were cut off in the middle of our geological researches. I believe the chief law of that science, which is the phenomenon of the internal heat of mines, is at the bottom of Bacon's entire chemical theory. It would have remained for us to study the internal heat of men and women. I am grieved that we have not applied ourselves to this most fascinating subject."

One of Bustamante's followers came up and roughly ordered Don Eugenio to place himself among the rest, between the riders.

"But are you not grieved," I said, as we were doing what this man commanded, "are you not a little grieved because Maria has deserted you?"

"I ordered her to do it," said my master. "And remember to be very careful, as I told you."

But there was no risk of any indiscretion, for Maria rode beside her lover, far ahead of us, and we four luckless ones on foot were in the middle of the cavalcade. Thank heaven that the road was very bad for horses, which prevented them from going fast; in fact, the horses often were obliged to stop and test a boulder with their front legs—this was one of the old Spanish highways that had fallen into disrepair. What we most suffered from was the uncertainty about our fate. And we should have been glad to know where we were being taken to. The horsemen just in front of us and just behind us merely uttered a contemptuous word from time to time, and later on they scarcely spoke to us at all. And so it came about that Don Eugenio was able to explain to me how he had managed with Maria.

"It was in the middle of the night," he said, "that I was roused by those two persons, who requested

me to go with them into the jungle. Bustamante's manner had completely changed—he brought back to my mind a certain picture in the *Soul-Combat* of Prudentius, the Christian poet ; we had a good copy of this book at Zaragoza, with uncoloured illustrations of the tenth century, and Bustamante did indeed resemble one of the five anxious Virtues who are interviewing Avarice. You probably will not believe me, but when I looked at the girl I saw in her an even greater similarity to Avarice, whose hands are open and whose eyes are very round and whose expression is so innocent. They whispered that if I would go with them into the jungle I could settle what they had to put before me and they would infallibly abide by my decision. It appeared that she had been rejecting his advances ; and the captain told me that in matters of this kind he was extremely chivalrous. He never took a girl, he said, against her will, and he believed that this characteristic had made him famous throughout the region. Well, Maria had referred him to myself ; if I agreed then she would raise no further obstacle. Of course I could have given my consent immediately and saved myself some inconvenience, but I thought it would be more becoming if I went with them into the jungle. Now I do not know if I was right or wrong, but I was under the impression that Maria would consent as soon as I had said the slightest word and thus I was a little sore that I should have been roused so needlessly. Aye, that is how they irritate us. It is doubtful whether I should have been able to preserve the proper frame of mind if I had not remembered what some holy ones have said concerning women. First of all, if we should be disposed to think ourselves superior to them and therefore to rejoice, we have the salutary

words of Saint John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople : ‘ We are ordained,’ said he, ‘ to rule over them ; not merely that we may rule, but that we may rule in goodness also ; for he that ruleth ought especially to rule in this respect, by excelling in virtue ; whereas if he is surpassed he is no longer the ruler.’ And, with regard to the waywardness of women, I remembered happily the words of that sagacious Father who advised us to suspect a woman if her actions seemed all clear and open ; such a woman, said that Father, was an emissary of the Devil and no real woman who inherited from Eve some trace of sin and who might also hope she would inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. This Father whose well-balanced writings, my dear Juanito, I commend to you most warmly—wise men will be guided by them after you and I and this ridiculous old Noahcote are totally forgotten—well, this Father says, in one of his main chapters, that it is most excellent to have one’s own opinion, though it is a thing for which one has to pay. And it is his opinion that the woman you need not suspect is she who on the one hand does not ostentatiously lay all her actions bare, and on the other hand does not conceal them absolutely. She in whom we place our confidence must regulate her actions towards us even as she regulates her dress. I may inform you that the average man is not attracted nor repelled by what is in a woman’s soul ; the voice that speaks to him imperiously is the body of a woman. And the woman knows it, whether he does or does not. She has the sense to take the average man, beyond all others, into her consideration, and she usually lets him see of her a little less than he believes that he would like to see. ‘ Strong and perfect as are Urim and Thummin on the breastplate

of the high priest,' says that venerated Father, 'just as strong and perfect is the man who knoweth what he wants.' The robes of women seem to the philosopher to be designed not so much for the purpose of obscuring and of veiling the fine texture and the outlines of her body as the texture and the outlines of the thoughts of man. Now they have said that the most futile error of a human being is to prophesy, for he is ignorant of what the future has in store; and yet is it not much more foolish for a man to guess and guess at what he knows already? Think of all the years which men have spent in pondering about a woman's body. And before you think of judging any woman, ask yourself if you would like her to be judging you.

"*Bueno*, we went out into the jungle. Bustamante walked in front, to show the way to us; Maria and myself walked hand in hand. He led us carefully and we kept close behind him. Underneath the trees the ground was very soft and mossy, but we did not seat ourselves till Bustamante thought we had gone far enough to talk without arousing anyone. However, we did very little talking and the little that there was was very friendly. I reminded him of what Cervantes says, that things which cost a trifle are not much esteemed. He said he loved her more than any woman he had ever owned. And I said that a woman's love is far too often cast like sunbeams on a dunghill and the dunghill then becomes, I said, more disagreeable. But if he really loved Maria there must be some goodness in him. And he asked Maria to embrace me, which she did, and then I left them."

While my master was discoursing to me in this memorable fashion we continued to advance, as best

we could, along that ancient highway. At a certain point it made abruptly for the mountain barrier, and we struck off towards the lowlands. Then a horseman was so kind as to inform us that we also should be going over there to Tamaulipas, but we had to cross the boundary a little further down. It was much pleasanter for us to walk along these meadows than it had been on the road. And fortunately they were saving up their horses, so that we were not compelled to walk more rapidly. The meadows had upon them, here and there, a cow—perhaps the owner of them was a Liberal, and so we let them graze in peace. But suddenly we heard a shot, and saw that one of them was lying on her side and kicking. It was Bustamante who had done this, for Maria's sake. He had been asking her, as we learned presently, what he could give her to display the greatness of his love ; and she, who might have easily obtained the silver decorations on his hat or some of his gay buttons or a piece or two of gold, was moved to think of something higher. She had heard that people in the large towns sometimes drink the milk of cows, which is procured in tins from foreign countries,* and she said that it would give her much delight to have a cup of cow's milk. That is why her lover Bustamante shot the cow. And while this matter was attended to, we others walked a little way and then sank down upon a slope amid green bushy shrubs and brilliant *floripundio* flowers. The horsemen waited on their animals till Bustamante should arrive, and when he came he was in such good humour that he said we would have our siesta in this place and would not march away until Maria wished it. He dismounted, as did all the others.

Soon they were all lounging on the grass or lying prostrate with their hats upon their faces, to protect

* See Note II., p. 317.

themselves from insects. One or two of them repaired a saddle or began to clean a gun, but far the busiest person was Maria, who had started with enormous zeal to make *tortillas*. On her knees she rubbed and rubbed the flour and did not once look up, for she was anxious not to meet the eyes of her old friends. We four sat down together; I remember it as well as if it happened yesterday how Don Eugenio, to make himself more comfortable, took out from his breast the several books which he was carrying—some of the pious ones from Zaragoza and that other one which was about a Mexican Archbishop and which was entitled “Safeguard against Oblivion.” Bustamante stood behind Maria, to encourage her—his eyes were glowing—and at last when she had made a few *tortillas* and some other food had been unpacked we, most of us, were eating. We were eating in an indolent and airy fashion, for it was extremely hot, and there was not much conversation. We four prisoners were treated nonchalantly; they were talking to us just as much as to each other and in fact we all were at our ease. Then Bustamante, who was seated now beside Maria and was looking at her very tenderly—not caring whether anyone observed it—Bustamante turned to Don Arcadio and told him casually that he thought his execution would take place on the next morning, that is, if we came that night to San Geronimo in Tamaulipas, where the trial would be held.

It was extraordinary how calm the Noahcite was. Perhaps he had been sure that this would happen; but I never thought that he could so control himself. The work to which he had devoted all his life would now be wasted. And he did not seem to care. And, on the other hand, he did not let a supercilious smile

be on his lips ; I had been told that heroes when they were condemned invariably wore it. Don Arcadio's face was serious, but not more serious than usual. As I gazed at him I told myself that he was much more difficult to understand than Don Eugenio. But although I did not understand him properly, there may be clever people who, from my description, will know more of him than ever was vouchsafed to me.

Then Bustamante spoke : " In years that have gone by," said he, " when I was no politician and no patriot I used to be a shoemaker, and I have made for you and for your father and your brother who are dead. It grieves me that I have to put an end to you."

" But if you think I am a spy," said Don Arcadio, very simply, " then you have no choice."

" *Caramba*," said the captain, " I will not allow you to be shot in that way, without honour. Since I was so well-acquainted with your family and you, I will arrange a very noble ceremony for to-morrow morning. And when you see your father and your brother afterwards, I hope that you will all three be so generous as to pray for me who need your prayers. It is myself that I am speaking of." He had been growing more and more affected. Now he turned his back abruptly on the Noahcite, and I could see his shoulders twitching.

As for poor Faustino, he sat helplessly and hopelessly beside us. Tears were following each other down his cheeks, but he did not make any sound. And Don Eugenio cleared his throat and said that he would read a little from a book.

" It is a lesson for us all," said he, " to contemplate the grandeur of the Noahcite. His very lofty aim is unachieved, alas ! and he does not revile his fate.

But if he thinks that all of him will be forgotten, he may like to hear a passage from this book."

"May the Devil seize you!" Bustamante cried. He shook his fist above his head, but did not turn his body round towards us. "Will you leave the man alone, for he is in a corner out of which he never will escape. I pity him, I tell you."

"And I pity you," said Don Eugenio serenely, "if you think that there is no escape. Whether he dies sooner or dies later, he will not be killed entirely. As for you, permit me to remind you of the very foolish Pluches who wrote the *Spectacle de la Nature* and said—he was an enemy of Newton's—that if the great mass had such a power of attraction he could not comprehend how anybody could escape out of a corner of Notre Dame. . . . This book," my master said, "is by Antonio de Robles, a notary public, a commissary of the Holy Office, an ecclesiastical judge and so forth."

Practically everyone was staring at my master on account of his rebuke to Bustamante. I suppose that they had never heard their leader spoken to in such a way. And one or two of them were smiling grimly, but I was uncertain of the reason.

Then the Noaheite addressed my master: "I am interested in your book," said he, "but I should like to tell you that since yesterday a change has come to my philosophy. What I have hitherto pursued was knowledge, all the knowledge of the human race, and thus I was to grasp at happiness, which I would then bestow on all the world. But I have come to the conclusion that a greater thing than happiness is beauty. I am glad that I discovered this in time. Well, I am ready for your admirable book, and pray do not stop to congratulate me or to comment on

my new pursuit. These gentlemen would like to hear what you have got to read."

"So be it," Don Eugenio said. "I see the date is 1757. I will try to find the profitable passages," he said; and for a long time, while he did so, everybody watched him. But Maria went on making the *tortillas*, which were passed from hand to hand, as also were the strips of meat. I did not know how long we would remain, but no one seemed to be in any hurry to depart—they lay among the gorgeous flowers, and they slowly ate and watched my master. He was eating while he read; he searched and searched the book, and his expression always grew more fixed. So concentrated was he on his task that I am sure he did not know his hand was carrying from time to time some food into his mouth. And when at last he spoke to us his mouth was rather full.

"Unhappily," he said, "this man, Antonio de Robles, does not appear to have, as I had confidently hoped, a general safeguard against oblivion. He considers only his particular Archbishop, who will be remembered, so he says, because of certain merits. By the way, have we not all of us observed that if a person is the subject of a brief discussion he may have been favourably judged, whereas if the discussion is a long one he will have been judged severely? And I think that the Archbishop would have made himself more safe against oblivion if Antonio de Robles had put down a series of demerits. Here," said Don Eugenio, "in the twentieth chapter is the list of qualities: 'His aloofness and his understanding, his humility, his inimitable temperance and mortification, his purity and chastity, his wonderful haranguing and the sacred exercises of his soul'"—at this point Don Eugenio paused and finished what was in his

mouth—" ' the gift of tears, which he was even wont to shed while he was sleeping.' Is it necessary to read on ? I must admit that if a man is capable of shedding tears for his iniquities or any other thing while he is sleeping, everybody—except the individual who may be called upon to share his bed—must unreservedly admire him. How will such a man of marvels be forgotten ? Yes, it seems to me that you will never find a greater man among the holy ones, or in the words of Augustine: *Si Sanctorum singulorum perquirerem vitas, ut puto majorem neminem invenirem.*" And my master, who at first lost his patience with the book, had now regained his equanimity. He turned back to the early pages, and his smile was like a blessing. He was perfectly absorbed.

And when, at Bustamante's signal, everyone prepared to start again, then Don Eugenio got up. He did not seem to know what he was doing, and the happy smile remained upon his face until Faustino brought the mule to him, and then he was astonished. But Faustino told him that we all—himself included—would be riding now, in order to reach San Geronimo that night.

We sped through numbers of green meadows and the trees went flying past us. All the afternoon we hurried on—there was no road at all, and I am not sure if we were avoiding any villages. We rode down two ravines, that were both steep and rocky ; we climbed up on the side opposite. And towards the fall of night I grew so tired that I did not for a time brush off a yellow insect from my hand, though he was drawing blood. I merely looked at him. And it was in the dark when finally we found ourselves upon a road, and then the palm-trees gave way to a

hedge of cactus—we were in the place called San Geronimo.

This was in the possession of the Liberals, and in a very little time we had an escort of white figures who rose up from where they had been sitting near the hedge or came out of their little houses. As they walked along beside us, some of our men told them of a series of great exploits, ending up with the defeat and capture of ourselves. I was so weary that I could not notice much, but over everything there was the stolid silence of these villagers. They were so different from the natives of Jalapa and so like too many people of my native Colorado.

Then we halted. I could see two men with torches who had come to speak to Bustamante. And instead of taking us to some place where we could lie down, they and the rest of us went to the largest house, the house of the *alcalde*. They were going to hold the trial of the Noahcite.

Outside the house there was a great deal of confusion, as the followers of Bustamante all got off their horses and in vain they looked for anyone who would take care of them. The whole of San Geronimo was pushing into the *alcalde's* house. They did not mind how much the followers of Bustamante cursed them. And the men with torches even struck at one or two. I heard the shout of somebody who said that he had lived in San Geronimo for sixty years and let them try their culprit in another place, said he, if they intended to deprive the people of their rights. Then I saw Bustamante pushing in with Don Arcadio and some others.

In the midst of all the turmoil and as I was standing with my mule, a horseman threw his reins around my head and then another did the same, and several

others put their reins into my hands. I found myself with half-a-dozen animals to watch, but they all looked as weary as I was myself. And when Maria's voice was in my ear and she was making me some propositions I let all the reins drop, for I knew these creatures would not run away. Maria wanted me to lift her up, because the windows were so high. And afterwards, she said, she would lift me up also, and in that way we would see the whole of Don Arcadio's trial.

I went with her very eagerly, until we came to where some of the natives had assembled, underneath a window, and we followed their example: I bent down, Maria stood upon my back and with her hand she grasped the iron bars. She told me that she could see very well indeed. But I was being pushed about by other people who had reached the window after us. Maria said that our three friends were all together, but the people who surrounded us began to make so great a noise that neither she nor I could hear what those inside the room were saying. And Maria was so heavy that I wished we had not come. I touched her legs and said that it would be better if we went away, but she pretended not to hear me.

"Bustamante speaks!" she cried, "and he is waving both his arms."

"Oh, you nephew of the Devil!" growled a man beside me. "You are keeping me away. And who are you?"

He and the others started arguing, for some said that as strangers we must be received with courtesy and others swore that they would not allow us to remain. Of course, with all this added noise it was impossible for anyone to hear a word of Don Arcadio's trial. And I wondered why the men inside the room

did not throw water on us or inform us in some other way that we must have respect for Justice.

Suddenly I thought that as Maria had been so unfaithful to me, why should I be helping her in such a slavish manner? No, I would not for another moment. And I moved away, I staggered out from all those people, out into the doorway of another house, and soon Maria came and sat down at my side.

"We only have to listen to them," so she said, "and it will be as if we saw it all ourselves."

"Oh, you nephew of the Devil!" I exclaimed. I shook her off and she began to cry.

"If—if," she sobbed, "you really loved me, if you . . ."

And I asked her roughly to be quiet.

"You would know," she sobbed, "how difficult it is to be a girl. You are the one I love, by all the saints."

"And what of Bustamante?"

She was pouring kisses over me, and in my ear she murmured that we would escape together, like the man whom Don Eugenio was talking of.

We sat there very peacefully and we paid no attention to the varied noises. Once I thought that I could hear Faustino, then again it was a whirl of sound. And we were happy. I believe we sat there for a long time.

Somewhere in the night a bird was singing, and I shivered, for I thought of Don Arcadio.

"Oh, kiss me, kiss me," sighed Maria.

CHAPTER XX

WE stayed there till the crowd of natives at the window suddenly dissolved itself and passed into the night. They went in almost perfect silence, and the people who were streaming out of the *alcalde's* house were so subdued that I could hope that Don Arcadio's fate was undecided. Surely if they had resolved to shoot him as a spy they would have shrieked their "Liberty and the Democracy!" or some such words of triumph. But when I ran forward to a little group I heard them say at once that it would be in a few hours. Well, why had they not triumphed over the poor Noaheite? I thought that the most likely explanation was that Don Eugenio had pleaded for him.

Bustamante came on to the steps of the *alcalde's* house; he looked as stern as possible, and he was tugging his moustache. But, nevertheless, Maria made her way towards him. And he nodded at her.

I did not feel absolutely confident about the fate of Don Eugenio, and when at last the flow of people from the house was finished and the door was shut and he had not emerged I was afraid to question anybody. But when I reached the back of the *alcalde's* house I heard my name; and there was my dear master in the blackness of a cellar dungeon. He had seen me passing overhead as he looked out into the night of stars. But when I tremulously asked what they were going to do with him, he told me that the other two were in the dungeon also; they were utterly exhausted

and asleep. He did not know if there would be a priest for Don Arcadio's confession, and he was endeavouring to make himself as worthy as he could for this last office.

"You may know," said he, "that if there is no priest available, the Catholic father of a dying child must christen it himself; the water may be ordinary clean water. And I think, for Don Arcadio's confession, that it is incumbent on me to remove out of my mind as much uncleanness as possible. Oh, I have never thought of my untoward life with half the sorrow that I feel at present. But, in spite of it, I am afraid that I would also fall asleep if I sat down."

"But is your life in jeopardy?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Now go away, my son," said he, "and come back here soon after dawn."

I had to ask him if he did not think it horrible that Don Arcadio, who was such a blameless man and so benevolent, should have to die in this way. And my master said that if I wanted to prolong his life he would advise me to secure the flesh of winged serpents. He informed me that he had it out of Roger Bacon how they were employed with great effect by Tantalus, a man who was attached to the person of the King of India. But if Plato and Aristotle failed to prolong their existence it was not surprising, for they were ignorant even of the quadrature of the circle which Bacon declares to have been well known at his time, and which is indefinitely inferior to the grand medical doctrine of Tantalus.

As he was saying this my master laughed. He laughed in such a fashion that I could not bear to look at him. He put his hand out through the iron bars and gripped me round the wrist, in order to encourage me. And then I crept away.

It seemed to me, as I went wandering along the dark, deserted roads of San Geronimo, that in this world there was no justice anywhere. Why should a man like Don Arcadio be executed, for although I did not understand his beautiful, great, philanthropic scheme, of course it must be understood by God, and why did God allow him to be murdered? Surely there could be no God, I thought; and as the watchman strode along he raised his melancholy voice and cried, "It wants an hour to midnight, it is calm and very dark." He carried an old soldier's lance upon his shoulder, and the iron tip of it was faintly gleaming in the starlight. There was no trace of the moon, but all the sky was lit with stars and they were shining very brilliantly. "It wants an hour to midnight," cried the watchman, "it is calm and very dark." He walked across an open space—I followed him—and I could see him quite distinctly. He himself must have perceived that it was lighter, for his lance turned backwards and he was examining the sky; but he continued with the same announcement, "It is calm and very dark." And as I looked at all those stars they seemed to me to be the eyes of God. And I stood still and gazed at them. The watchman passed away from me, so that I could no longer see him, but I still could hear him calling, "Calm and very dark."

I found a shelter underneath a hedge of cactus, and at daybreak I was wakened by the noise of some excited people. They were arguing with one another very vehemently, and I heard them say it was a scandal and an outrage. They were gathered round a thin, tall, nervous-looking fellow, and he clearly was amused. They shouted at him, but his answer was to hold up all the fingers of one hand. "It is

exorbitant! You are a sinful man of avarice! Oh, wait," they cried, "until you have the yellow fever! Do you think that we have endless money?" And they shouted other things.

One old dilapidated woman stood apart, and in a cracked voice she was saying, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." I could see that she was counting on her fingers. And when she had thus invoked the name sufficiently she lifted up her miserable voice and sang:

"Get thee, Satan, far from me.
Near my death-bed thou shalt not be,
Seeing that upon the day
Of Holy Cross I used to say
A thousand times Jesus, Jesus,
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus."

Then she continued with the recitation of her kind of rosary. And all the time those angry persons were entirely taken up with the tall man. He shook his head and smiled at them, the more they objugated him. "And only for the reason that you are a friend of the *alcalde*! It is monstrous! Why should you have such a place instead of us? For God's sake, will you sell it for three ounces?" But the man held all his fingers up and went on smiling. "Wait until your luck deserts you! Then in our turn we shall laugh!" so they exclaimed. "And why should you be of the firing-party more than Tomás or Angel or Cristobalito or any of us? *Vaya*, will you sell the place or will you not? Oh, wretched miser! But one cannot have a hide without the claws."

The poor old woman halted in her invocation. She was staring at her hands and muttering, because the noise had caused her to forget how often she had said the name of Jesus. And she looked upon those people with reproachful eyes.

"Well, how much will you sell it for?" cried one.

"You hold yourself as if you had the place by merit? Have you ever shot a gun in all your life?"

"And which of you can shoot indeed? Aha," declared the tall man, "you will not insult me very easily. Now I must go and talk to the *alcalde*. Will you let me pass along?"

They clustered round him, so that he could not escape, and while he shouted they were shouting back. The poor old woman, in the meantime, rolled away to a more quiet place.

"*Fucha!*" called a voice, "then I will pay two ounces and Angel two. What do you say?"

He looked thoughtful. And again they all spoke at the same time; but before they went away it had been settled that he should receive four ounces and that those two persons should have his place in the firing-party.

I went hastily to where I had been speaking with my master, but he was not in the dungeon and the other two were not there either. As I peered in through the bars I saw that it was empty, and I could see very well because some light was entering by the open door in the wall opposite. Two followers of Bustamante happened to be going past, and when they saw me they enquired if ghosts were living in that cellar. And they laughed at me and crossed themselves.

But when I asked them eagerly for news of Don Eugenio and the others, they explained that we were to assemble in a field outside the village. They would show me where it lay.

And on the road they asked me who I was and where I came from and where I was going to. They asked me many other questions in a kindly way and

did not seem to mind the vagueness of my answers, if indeed I answered them at all. We overtook a number of pedestrians and several men on horseback—these were the officials—and at last we came into a field from which the mist had not all gone, though it was very warm already. In the next field, so they told me, I would find my friends who had been brought there by an escort. But as I ran on I saw that in the middle of the field my master and the Noahcite were sitting on a pile of stones ; Faustino stood beside them and the escort was a long way off. Since it is customary for a man in Mexico to make a speech before they shoot him, whether he is guilty of a crime or whether he has been a politician, they had all retired from Don Arcadio and the others, so that he could make his preparations for a worthy speech. When I came up to them my master motioned me to sit down at his side.

Faustino happened to be speaking, in a tone of grim determination : “ They shall pay for it,” said he, “ and they shall pay a hundred-fold. The birds shall . . . ”

“ Thank you, thank you,” interrupted Don Arcadio, “ you have been more than faithful to me, dear Faustino, during all these years, and you would never rest, I know, until you had avenged me. But how ugly is the thought of vultures tearing up the flesh of Bustamante. And I want my last thoughts to be turned towards the beautiful. Have I not told you that it is no longer happiness but beauty which I am pursuing.”

“ My dear friend,” said Don Eugenio, “ I used to think that you were mad, but now I think it is with a celestial madness, and that God is talking through you. Otherwise how could you at this last, when you

are going to lose your life, go so serenely on a new pursuit ? ”

“ But I have found life ! ” Don Arcadio cried. “ He who has turned his eyes to that which is worth more than life itself, he surely has found life ! ”

My master had been weeping, but a smile now flickered on his face.

“ It seems to me,” said Don Arcadio, “ that we shall not discover what life’s beauty is if we believe that it lies in the loveliness and strength of body or in loveliness and brilliance of the mind. The beauty of our life is in pursuing with the greatest zeal that beauty which is out beyond us and which we can never reach. I say it wants the greatest zeal, because a glimpse of everlasting beauty may well bring the tears into our eyes. You, my dear friend,” said he, his hand on Don Eugenio’s arm, “ what were you weeping for ? . . . But I will leave you for a little time,” he said.

And as he walked away from us towards another rock and there sat down, a hundred paces off, I could not keep myself from shuddering. His words I had not understood, but I was thinking of that most abominable firing-party which would utterly destroy the beauty of his body.

Then my master clenched his fist and looked up at Faustino, and “ By all the holy saints,” he said, “ that man shall not be killed. We must prevent it ! ”

But Faustino threw his hands out.

“ We must talk to them. There may be something noble left in Bustamante.”

“ May the vultures tear it out,” Faustino said, in bitterness.

“ I tell you,” said my master, “ if I have to give myself instead of him, I do not care. But Don

Arcadio shall not be killed. Just when he has become a sane man, after all these years. And he is so divinely sane. He shall not, shall not die."

We heard the quavering voice of that old woman :

"Get thee, Satan, far from me,
Near my death-bed thou shalt not be,
Seeing that . . ."

"Oh, what can I do ?" cried Don Eugenio. "This is a most wretched country."

"And he has not been confessed," Faustino said, in desolation. "Oh, what can I do ?"

The voice of the old woman still continued :

"Of Holy Cross I used to say
A thousand times Jesus, Jesus,
Jesus . . ."

"Ah, look there!" cried Faustino. "Look at them !"

A mob of people, some on foot and some on horse-back, was advancing towards us. It was a large crowd, though I could not see distinctly for the sun was dazzling. It had burst through the last fragments of the mist and nobody, I think, could have avoided seeing that it was a warrior much more gay and splendid than those countrymen of ours whom it endeavoured to conceal from us.

Don Eugenio whispered to me that I was to run into the village and bring out the priest. He knew there was none, but he did not wish me to remain there.

And as I was racing back towards the village I was shouting at the sunlight, I was laughing at it—so Maria told me later on—and I was running with my head now this way, so she told me, and now that, as if I were afraid of being struck.

CHAPTER XXI

MARIA told me many other things while she was sitting on my bed. I was so feeble and so happy that I did not even want to know why I was there. It was sufficient that Maria should be smiling down upon me, and her smile was drawing me out of a dark abyss . . . I do not like those people who will not acknowledge how profound a love they have for any friend until they lose him, but I am not sure if you do not look more profoundly into anybody's heart if you yourself are nearly lost. When you are lying there so prostrate and so feeble, when you have let your little energies and obstinacies slip away from you, then you no longer set up a resistance to the love which from the heart of the dear friend is pouring over you. How strange it is that when your body is so powerless you should be far more likely to perceive what a tremendous and eternal power the wings of love can grant to you. It is a fact—such is our country—that a Mexican has often said to a beloved person that his feeling for her is unparalleled in all the universe. We Mexicans may have the Spanish blood in us diluted or imaginary, but all that does not diminish in the least some Spanish traits—and they believed that what they said was true and often the beloved person also thought that it was true—what would you more? But as for me, I must say that I did not know how great a love there was between Maria and myself until those days in San

Geronimo. It was the weakness of my body and my growing love which hindered me from paying much attention to the words she said. I did not greatly mind what accident had brought me to that room, so long as I could happily remain there.

It was a bare room, like any other, and from time to time the owners of the house—an oldish couple—would come in and look at me and gravely nod their heads. But all my food was brought me by Maria.

And one day she said that Don Eugenio was lying in another house. Both he and I were getting well again, she said. It was the death of Don Arcadio which had overwhelmed us.

“For a week or so,” quoth she, “poor Don Eugenio was worse than you. We had to rope him to the bed. And in the middle of his imprecations, which were terrible, he laughed and sang together—as you did yourself when you were running down the street before that execution.”

I remembered in a flash about the vultures that Faustino spoke of, and I prayed that they might feast on Bustamante.

But Maria said that Bustamante had permitted her to nurse the pair of us. “One must not be ungrateful,” said Maria. “And he never punished Don Eugenio,” she said, “for any of the fearful things he uttered. Don Eugenio has been calling down on Bustamante’s head a list of punishments that we in Mexico had never heard of and he cursed him with round Spanish oaths, or else they may have been from learned books ; at any rate the people who were loitering outside the house could listen easily, and what he said was carried up to Bustamante, if by chance he was not present. All I recollect,”

pursued Maria, "are two words: *Anathema sit!* Whatever he might say he ended up with those two words. And there is in the town, which is three hours away, a diligent young schoolmaster. He left his school and came here on a horse, and now he stays with Don Eugenio, putting down those imprecations on a piece of paper. He is one who studies everything, and now he will not leave where Don Eugenio is, but with the spectacles upon his long, thin nose he gazes at him, and he waits for words."

"But is my master still in the same state?" said I. "You told me he was getting well again."

"Because he curses," said Maria. "For a time he was quite gentle, he was humble and devout, so that we were afraid that he was going to die. But now, the gods be thanked, he has returned to imprecations, and it is a certain sign that he is getting well. As soon as you are strong enough, my Juanito, you shall come with me to listen. They are all so full of admiration in that room and very happy—it is like an entertainment—all except one man, who is severe and says that Don Eugenio, if he should die in this condition, will be lost for ever. But the schoolmaster is fighting with that man. He loves our Don Eugenio because of his great language, and he also says that he is very like the early Christians, who were careful, first of all, in their assemblies to consign the pagans and the heretics to execration and to physical chastisement, or if these should not be brought about, then to damnation for eternity."

"I wish," said I, "that we could go to Don Eugenio."

"And then he laughed and sang and prayed, but always in delirium. And then one day he sobbed unceasingly, and after that he was quite humble—it

“‘I do not know,’ said the severe man. ‘I am very much surprised at your behaviour.’

“‘It was years ago,’ said Don Eugenio, ‘and, moreover, I did nothing. She ran up and down the corridor as if she were distracted. She was making very wild and incoherent sounds—I put my head out—she was in her night-attire and barefoot. When I urged her to be calm, to tell me calmly what had happened, she could not control herself; but finally she said that Don Fulano, who was old, was lying on her bed, a corpse.’

“‘It would be well,’ said the severe man, ‘if you would remember that you may yourself at any moment be a corpse.’

“‘And when they arose early in the morning,’ said Don Eugenio, ‘behold, they were all dead corpses.’

“I believe he was repeating this from Holy Scripture.

“‘Well,’ said he, ‘I told the woman that she was disturbing everyone and that it would be better if she came with me to the proprietor, as I myself did not know what to do in such a case. While we were going she continued with her lamentations, and while I was knocking at the door of the proprietor she moaned; and yet he did not hear us, for he had a heavy sleep. I knocked,’ said Don Eugenio, ‘more loudly, so that he awakened and replied. I told him what had happened and I asked him what we ought to do, but he said only: “Glorious death!” and then rolled over on his side and went to sleep again.’

“The telling of this tale,” pursued Maria, “caused him to forget how weak he was.” If he had not been weak, thought I, he would not have recited such a mediocre tale; but on the other hand my master’s life was lovely, like a flower that blooms and fades, not like the painting of a flower.

"But as he finished it," quoth Maria, "he lay there with his eyes shut, smiling faintly. Thereupon the schoolmaster said that he need not, anyhow, sing all the litany, he might sing the conclusion of it. Don Eugenio did not answer him, but only frowned. He said again that Don Eugenio might omit the rest, and your good master said that he was very sorry he could not so much as reach the 'Mater immaculata,' and it was a hundred years ago exactly, so he said, it was in 1766 that Pope Clement XIII granted Spain the privilege of adding this after the 'Mater intemerata.' What a man is Don Eugenio!"

"There cannot be in all the world," I said, "a more delightful and more gracious soul. If you and I, Maria," so I said, "can see how excellent a man he is, you may be sure that if we had the understanding we should see much more than that. And we shall never meet with anyone who equals him in grandeur or in charm of thought, who can surpass him for gay wisdom and for real virtue. He does not, like many others, feign to be more wicked than God made him . . ."

"Juanito, my dear love," she murmured.

I was like a stone from which a fire was leaping, and I had not known that it was in me. But this world is a good place, I think, because it may be given to us once or twice to come in contact with a person who will make us live.

". . . . and he never," I continued, "injured anyone, you may be sure, except himself. All other men he is prepared to serve—he is a river which brings to the land its fruitfulness and rolls along beneath the willows, meditating, and which flings itself down cataracts in laughter. Yes, that is our Don Eugenio; and in the daytime he reflects what is in heaven

and earth, like one of those clear streams, and in the night he is the brother of old darkness and the stars."

Maria was still sitting on my bed. And now she threw herself into my arms. "How splendidly you speak!" said she.

When I could speak again I pointed out that everything which I possessed had come from Don Eugenio.

"My dear one, my most Holy Sacrament, my little lamp of olive oil!" said she.

We stayed there for a time in happiness, and later on she said that if I had the strength I might go with her to the house where Don Eugenio lay. And, leaning on her arm, I went there—fortunately it was not far distant.

In the room was Don Eugenio, fastened to the bed with ropes, and he was talking vehemently. Several persons whom I had not seen before were round about him, and Faustino was there also, looking most dejected.

When my master saw me he broke off in his tirade and "Oh, you villainous young man!" he cried. "You that have forged the Apostolic Letters and that gave a judgment which was odiously unjust and stole my concubine. You have adulterated food and drink, you have uprooted all the boundary-stones and so you shall, I vow you shall, be punished by canonical and civil law. What have you done?" He glared at me. "And why? *Carajo*, tell me, monster of ingratitude, the boy I loved—the—the . . ."

A man—he was the schoolmaster—made signs to me that I should go. Maria likewise had been thinking that it would be better, and she pulled me out into the open air. She told me that I need not feel

uneasy as to anything; his violence was one of the best symptoms and would soon subside.

We started walking round the house, and underneath a window, sitting on the ground, was Bustamante. He was stroking his moustache.

He was amused to see me. "You and I," said he, "we are the objects of his hatred. But you seem to care! He is a lunatic at present. It is nothing, Juanito. It will pass away, and that reminds me, I am going to-morrow."

"Juanito has been very ill," Maria said, "and he cannot be without me yet."

"Ah well, he shall have the best of all our horses, after mine, and you shall have a good one," Bustamante said. And, turning with a pleasant smile to me, he added that he liked me and that he would charge himself with looking after me. "To-morrow we must march towards the north," he said, "for that is what Juarez orders."

And by this time Don Eugenio was less furious. We could hear him talking with determination: "It is like a storm and we are being blown about. It is a stormy world," said he.

"May God protect us," said Faustino.

"Yes, but I would rather swim among the waves which throw you here and there, and fling you down and scream at you and fight with you than I would swim in a calm, placid sea. Oh, it is splendid to be fighting!" said my master.

"God protect you," said Faustino.

"From iniquity and evil thoughts," said Don Eugenio. "It seems to me that I was talking with great roughness—was it against Bustamante? Well, he did us wrong. But, nevertheless, if anybody murders me I hope that I will say: 'God be your judge.'"

"Amen. That is," Faustino said, "if God will judge him better than they do in Mexico."

"Do not be blasphemous," said the severe man, in a rasping voice. "God is the judge of all the world. He is immeasurably better than all other judges."

"That is true," Faustino said, "but why does He leave Mexico to them?"

And for a time Faustino, the severe man, Don Eugenio and some others were disputing, and one could not profit much by listening to them. Bustamante asked Maria and myself to go with him down to the stables, so that we could see the horses he intended us to have. I would have pleaded with him that we might remain at San Geronimo, I would if necessary have defied him, for I loathed the very thought of going, but Maria looked into my eyes, and off we went. And when we reached the stables, Bustamante was most gracious; he assisted us to mount those admirable horses, and he said that if we liked we could, in order to get used to them, go for a ride round San Geronimo.

So we proceeded for some distance down a shady road, and then Maria turned up through a wood of palms and other trees, and after coming to the ridge we went along it. Underneath us, to the right, we saw the gaily-coloured church of San Geronimo, and there was also the *alcalde's* house. Maria told me that I never would see San Geronimo again, because we two were going to escape. I trembled with excitement and with love for her, but how could I leave Don Eugenio? And then she said that Bustamante certainly would leave him, as he was too ill to travel. We would all be joined together later on, she said.

Well, there was nothing for me but to go with her.

I think she must have somehow learned about the country, for she never showed the slightest hesitation, and she said that we were on the road to Colorado. She had thought of everything, how we would live together in my native village, and how Don Eugenio would come to live with us. To her it all seemed very simple and I will confess that when we tied our horses up and rested in the middle of a wood, I was as ready as Maria to rejoice in what was going to happen. It would be delicious to have Don Eugenio sitting always happily on the verandah of my home. And what an honour for my parents ! Then Maria said she knew my mother would receive her very well, since she had saved me from becoming one of Bustamante's followers.

And, thanks to Bustamante's horses, we achieved the journey in three days, and you can easily imagine the reception that we had. Old Captain Bartolmé was just outside the village, sitting there amid a cluster of white flowers as if he knew that we were coming. And he told us with a candid smile that my good parents had invited him to make his home with them, because he was acquainted with so many stories of my doings in Jalapa. If they had not shown him this great hospitality, he said, then his old age would have been wretched, since the woman Enriqueta had transferred her faithfulness, he said, to her old friend Gonzalez of the shop.

While he was talking to us a few other people gathered round, and he assumed an air of big importance, for he had been with us in Jalapa. Thus he was too busy to enquire about the Noalcite or Don Eugenio. He said that now we would advance into the village and he marched, with pomp, in front of our two horses. He did not appear to have misgivings as

to his position at my parents' hearth now that I had returned. It seemed to me as if the poor old man who strutted there in front of us so proudly should have held himself more like a captive who is well aware that by the *Ley de Fuga* those who are behind will shoot him down for trying to escape and even if he does not try to do so.

In the first words that my parents uttered I was told how they had promised to the wonder-working Virgin of Chichicaxtle that, if I came back again to Colorado, they would not attempt to make me be a learned man above my station, but that, on the contrary, they would persuade me to become a breeder of the fighting-cocks. And that is what I have been doing ever since.

A few days after my return I travelled with my father and Maria to the cursed village San Geronimo. Our object was, of course, to fetch my master ; but he was not in the village. Nobody could tell us whither he had gone, and he had left no message for me. All that we could ascertain was that he and Faustino were still in the village after Bustamante left.

Perhaps he found a pleasant refuge here in Mexico, perhaps he and Faustino have been wandering for all these years, perhaps he went to Veracruz and took the boat for Spain ; and this I think is the more probable, as he would otherwise have surely come to Colorado. May God have protected him ! And may God have provided him—I say this with extreme sincerity—a worthier historian.

Much of what he taught me I have not remembered, much of his delightful conversation has now vanished and beyond recall, but my whole life, and I believe the lives of those around me, are made nobler by the frail and fading recollections of him that I still possess.

NOTE I

A tale extremely similar to this one came from Northern France in the year 1916, the burial-party being British and their clients German. But those people who are fond of tracing stories to their Buddhist source will certainly not be astonished that the same one should appear in our time, both in Northern France and Mexico. It may be that some readers will be interested if I deal with that part of the story—making it more simple—which depicts the man denying his own death (the “Mortuus Loquens,” as he is called by Poggio, that curious, irascible old humanist), and if I try to trace a step or two of its career down to our army and to Mexico from the original. . . . We need not argue here if folk-tales all originate in India, but a very good case is made out by Mr. Clouston (*Popular Tales and Fictions*. Edinburgh, 2 vols., 1887) for tracing all European drolls or comic folk-tales from the East. Many of them, as Mr. Clouston points out, can be found in the early Buddhist books, especially in the Játakas or Birth-stories which are said to have been related to his disciples by Gautama, the illustrious founder of Buddhism, as incidents which occurred to himself and others in former births, and were afterwards put into a literary form by his followers. There are two old stories in Ceylon which have a near affinity to jests of the “Mortuus Loquens” class, and which may be regarded as in the straight line of ancestry. The first of them deals with a rich man, the employer of twenty-five idiots, whose daily task it was to cut the plaintain leaves from which the servants ate and drank. One day the twenty-five had an idea that the task might be accomplished easily by one of them. “Let us therefore lie down,” they said, “on the soil and sleep like dead men, and let him who first utters a sound or opens his eyes undertake the work.” And when they were discovered in that state the master, thinking they were dead, ordered his servants to dig a deep hole and bury them. A grave was then dug and the idiots were, one by one, thrown into it; and when they were being covered up a tool that one of the servants was using hit an idiot on the leg so that he moaned. Thereupon all the

others exclaimed, "You were the first to utter a sound, therefore from henceforth you must take upon yourself the duty of providing the plaintain leaves." . . . The second story from Ceylon (cf. a paper on "Comparative Folk-lore," by W. Goonetilleke in *The Orientalist*, I, p. 122) is in a Hindu work entitled *Bharataka Dwatrinsati*, Thirty-two tales of Mendicant Monks. One Dandaka, a monk, is cutting the bough of a tree on which he sits, although some travellers warn him that if it breaks he will fall down and be killed. Eventually he does fall down and then he thinks how wise the travellers were, since everything they prophesied has come to pass ; and he believes that he is dead. His comrades carry him towards the cremation-place, and at a spot where the road branches they are undecided whether to go to the right or the left, and in the midst of the dispute the "dead" monk says : "Friends, quarrel not among yourselves ; when I was alive I always went by the left road." Then some of them say : "He always spoke the truth. Let us therefore take the left road." Certain passers-by declare that they are going to burn a man who is not dead. The monks reply that he is verily a corpse, and Dandaka himself persistently asserts that he is dead ; he relates with the most solemn protestations the prophecy of the travellers and how it was fulfilled . . . From the East the tale of "Mortuus Loquens" would be brought to Europe by Crusaders or by Mongol missionaries or by other travellers. The most eminent of folk-lorists are arguing the point, often with considerable wit and ferocity, as to the spread of Indo-European tales, but how these travelled they have not decided yet, nor indeed whether they are not survivals of primitive myths and legends, the common heritage of the whole Aryan race. However, we observe that the Chinese possess a variant of our tale ; in the *Hsias Lin Kuang Chi* collection of humorous anecdotes there is a story of a man who spoke when he should have behaved as if he were a corpse. The author, by the way, of this tale is unknown, for in China all literature, as Professor Giles points out, is pure ; novels and stories are not classed as literature, and so the authors of such works have no ambition to attach their names. One sees in consequence a great falling-off from what may be regarded as the national standard ; they excuse themselves by saying that the tales portray real life and therefore to omit the ordinary frailties of mortals would be to produce an incomplete and inadequate picture. This tale is concerned with a woman who, when she was entertaining a

paramour during the absence of her husband, was startled by hearing the latter knock at the house-door. She hurriedly bundled the man into a rice-sack, which she concealed in a corner of the room ; but when her husband came in he caught sight of it and asked in a stern voice : " What have you got in that sack ? " His wife was too terrified to answer ; and after an awkward pause, a voice from the sack was heard to say : " Only rice " . . . With regard to the diffusion of these Aryan Household Tales it will be safer if we do not cleave to any school, but if we hold that much may be due to the identity everywhere of early fancy and something as, for example, Mr. Andrew Lang maintains, to transmission. The Aryan people has itself been scattered widely, from Ceylon to Iceland ; and in Powell and Magnusson's *Legends of Iceland* (Second series, p. 627) there is another variant of our tale : a woman makes her husband believe that he is dressed in fine clothes when he is naked ; another persuades her husband that he is dead, and as he is being carried to the burial-ground he perceives the naked man who asserts that he is dressed, and in reply to him exclaims : " How I should laugh if I were not dead ! " . . . But although the tale may thus have come overland into the great mass of German and Scandinavian folk-lore, we can also trace it more easily to England by another route. Travelling with the Arabs westward it assumed that form of two thieves who pretended they were dead. " I wonder," says a passer-by, " which of the two died first." " It was myself," says one of them. In Turkey of the fourteenth century we find the tale attributed to the Khoja Nasr-ed-Dur, that perfectly historic buffoon who was in close relation to Tamerlane, the wild and celebrated conqueror. The Khoja is said to have asked his wife what the signs are by which a man is known to be dead. She told him that when his body and hands are cold, then he is dead. It happened that one very wintry day he was ascending a hill, and his feet and hands were very cold, remembering the words of his wife, he thought he was dead and laid himself down on the hill. Meanwhile, a number of wolves approached his donkey and tore it to pieces, so that the Khoja cried out : " Oh, ye wolves, eat the donkey, for the owner is dead ; if I were alive be sure I would have made it hot for you ! " In Borrow's version of this tale (*The Turkish Jester*, Ipswich, 1884), the man exclaims : " The ass is dead, it seems, and not the master." . . . Going further westward the Arabs took to Spain this tale, which there

received a characteristically sardonic twist. It is applied to Andrés Vesalius, the court-physician of Charles V, when he was dissecting a Spanish cavalier whom he had attended in his illness. When Vesalius thrust his knife into the gentleman's bosom, the latter shouted so that it was seen he was not dead, but very soon (cf. *Selected Works* of the Friar D. Benito Jerónimo Fejoo of Montenegro) he expired, because the blow had been a shrewd one . . . But while repeating this in order to show that the story was current in sixteenth century Spain, one should add that there are grounds for supposing that it was applied to Vesalius by his enemies. Throughout his life of fifty years the founder of modern anatomy was forced to wrestle with the prejudices of his age. A surgeon of the Imperial armies before he was twenty, he was not allowed to dissect a corpse, and therefore was obliged to haunt the Cemetery of the Innocents at Paris and to struggle with the dogs upon the dunghills, it is said, for their decaying prey. He was attacked as well by his old master Sylvius in a fiery pamphlet, and by others of the school of Galen; and it is alleged that, owing to his misadventure with the Spanish cavalier, the Inquisition ordered that he should be burned alive, and that this penalty was commuted into a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. However, it is much more likely that the Inquisition was displeased with him because, in their opinion, he did works of magic, and it is improbable that any living man would be considered dead by the wise author of the *De corporis humani fabrica*. One fancies that, apart from any pious motives which he may have had, the pilgrimage appealed to him as a relief from the unending persecution which he suffered. As he was returning, to assume the professorship of anatomy at Padua, his boat was wrecked and he succumbed at Zante . . . From Spain the "Mortuus Loquens" tale would naturally be transferred to Mexico . . . And England, which may have been reached through the German-Scandinavian route, was approached from Italy, where Poggio (who seems to have intercepted it in the fifteenth century as it passed from Turkey to Spain), gave such a reputation to all kinds of stories, original and otherwise, that the most famous authors have made themselves his channels of transmission. Thus the celebrated Ming tale, No. 268 of his *Facetiae* or Collection of good jokes and tales, with which the old Florentine had bantered his frequent victim Francesco Filelfo, is repeated in Rabelais, in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*.

in Ariosto, in the *Ducento Novelle* of Celio Malespini, in La Fontaine and elsewhere, yet none of them acknowledged their indebtedness to Poggio—perhaps they wanted the tale to return to the wistful vagueness of folk-lore, perhaps they were imbued with the afore-mentioned Chinese sentiment, and, while chivalrously allowing their own names to be branded, yet refused to reveal the name of the, so far as they knew, real author of this totally impure and hence unliterary tale. Some authors, on the other hand, who do refer to Poggio and who seem to us more honestly out-spoken, certainly are quite out-spoken : Gesner says that it is *opus turpissimum et aquis incendioque dignissimum*, while the Abbot Tritheme and Erasmus (who knew how to admire Poggio's erudition and style) are no less severe. The wandering old scholar, who was much given to laughter and invective, came back to his own town and was upbraided for his laxity of morals ; he decided that his friends should not appeal to him in vain and that he would henceforward lead a regular existence. So he put aside the mistress who had borne him fourteen children, married a young girl and wrote, among other works, his *Facetiæ*. These latter circulated all through Italy, France, Spain, Germany, England ; they were read by all such as understood Latin and were thoroughly appreciated, he tells us, by all men of letters. In certain of the stories there is no obscenity, and this applies to the "Mortuus Loquens," of which the English version is No. 48 of the 1567 edition of the *Mery Tales and Quicke Answers*, a jest-book that is supposed to have been used by Shakespeare. We are told of "a felowe dwellynge at Florence, called Nigniaca, whiche was not verye wyse, nor all a foole, but mery and iocunde." A party of young men persuaded him that he was sick, that he was dying, finally that he was dead. And when they were carrying his bier through the city a taverner's boy uttered a very harsh judgment upon the corpse, so that the latter put his head out and, "I wys, horeson," said he, "if I were alyve nowe, as I am dead, I wolde prove the a false lyer to thy face." . . . So we have followed the story in some of its variants as it travelled from the East. The latest manifestation of it was in that incident of the late war ; and if the German, who then played the part of "Mortuus Loquens" to the burial-party and denied his death, was a student of comparative folk-lore, he must certainly have found the situation of surpassing interest.

NOTE II

It is not my business to defend Juanito from the charge of anachronism, and I would not make this observation here unless I thought that certain critics, who have either overlooked or tolerated any other lapses into which he may have fallen, will now feel obliged to register a protest. They will admit that C. N. Horsford prepared condensed milk by the addition of lactose in 1849, also that commercially successful milk condensation began in 1856, but is it likely, they will ask, that Mexico imported such an article as early as 1866? Well, they may be surprised to hear what luxuries were sent to Maximilian and Carlota's Court and thus became the fashion. But if no tins of milk had gone by 1866 and if therefore Juanito's account of the above incident is somewhat inaccurate, one may remind the critic that the great *Diccionario Enciclopedico Hispano-Americano* (Barcelona, 1887) does not treat this quality of his with harshness. It explains that an anachronism is produced by various causes, such as either the author's ignorance, which is often justifiable, or else his wish to satisfy the taste of an ill-educated public, or else the levity which commonly arises from the very traits that are essential to those people who devote themselves to writing works of the imagination. Anachronisms, it adds, are a very grave and unbearable defect in didactic treatises, whereas in literature, and above all if unaccompanied by other and more serious faults, they have a very secondary importance. Then there is Quintana (1772-1857) who maintains that authors show by their occasional anachronisms how they are possessed of the two sterling attributes: facility and abandon. We shall attach the proper weight to this opinion if we recollect that Manuel José Quintana was not only a great poet but a most illustrious historian. Majestic in his narrative as Livy, profound as Tacitus in judging man and the event, dexterous as Sallust in his methods of assembling these and placing them in relief, this indefatigable gentleman was famous, among many other things, for having reached perfection in the matter of good taste.

H.B.

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